

LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION
Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 18th September 2012 at Totnes Fire Station.

1. Present; Jim Carfrae; David Mitchell; Liz Warnes; Roma Church; Ed Vidler; Shirley Prendergast; Lorette Logie; Jill Tomalin; Stephanie Parker; Keith Rennells; Catherine Munro; Susan Taylor

Apologies: Laurel Ellis; David Martin, Robert Vint

2. Minutes of the previous meeting: Confirmed as accurate.

3. Matters Arising

Trellis removal: the hazel trellis beside the herb garden has been removed, with the hazel stored in the shed.

Dandelion Tool: Shirley to email details of the more expensive version. **Action: Shirley**

4. SHDC Report

Keith distributed copies of his report (attached below). Among the matters arising were:

The membrane to suppress weeds - he agreed that SHDC could probably supply it and Lorette and Liz agreed they could install it.

The replacement entrance signs should be ready by the end of the month

It was agreed to switch to a twice yearly cut of the meadow.

Susan raised the matter of the compost bins. Both were full and she wondered what SHDC would do with grass cuttings after strimming. It was agreed that David Martin should install a third compost bin and any surplus could be piled neatly beside the bins. Roma noted that she needed more volunteers for tasks like this, and Keith agreed to produce an Autumn Workshop leaflet for a one-off volunteer session to sow the **yellow rattle** (and do any necessary tidying/raking up). **Action: Keith**

Susan asked about the maintenance of the water features and Keith confirmed that while they were SHDC's responsibility, he had no objection to volunteers clearing out weeds etc.

The question of a replacement for the dead magnolia was raised. It was agreed that the request by Totnes Caring for a tree to be planted in the garden to mark their 40th anniversary would not set a precedent to allow individuals to do so and Catherine agreed to contact Totnes Caring to see if they still wished to contribute a tree (**not a magnolia though**). **Action: Catherine**

Finally Shirley noted that various trees and shrubs needed coppicing or pruning. Keith agreed to investigate. **Action: Keith**

5. Pool Project

Jill summarised the email exchange with Phil McMahon of English Heritage (attached below). We now need to produce a proper plan listing tasks, responsibilities, planting scheme, costings, etc. It was agreed that the pool project should now be managed as part of the LGA committee's remit rather than being handled by a separate pool group. To facilitate this it was agreed that:

- We should revert to monthly meetings, with every other meeting being devoted entirely to pool project matters
- That as well as any LGA committee members who wished to attend, Jeannette and Janet should be invited to the pool meetings
- That Jill (who plans to step down from the committee in the near future) would produce the project plan. **Action: Jill**
- That Jim would notionally chair both types of meeting but would not be required to set the agenda for the pool meetings
- That Shirley would take responsibility for the planting scheme/design (aided by Jeannette)
- That Dave would take responsibility to the submission to English Heritage (assisted by Shirley)
- That Ed would take responsibility for funding
- That 'taking responsibility for' did **not** mean 'do all the work'

Shirley noted that she and Jeannette felt that two key tasks needed to be done this Autumn:

- Weed killer should be sprayed in the pool area
- Jim should produce an amended plan showing exactly where the fence/hedge would be **Action: Jim**

- The fence/willow should be moved to the proposed new position

Keith suggested an on-site meeting (with Shirley, Jeannette, Jim and Dave) to facilitate this, and it was

agreed he would email possible dates.

Action: Keith

6. Report on Meeting with SHDC and Heathway Residents

Jim, Dave and Keith summarised the meeting in the garden on 31st August between SHDC, members of the LGA committee and some of the Heathway residents (David Martin, Liz Warnes and Jeremy Logie). At that meeting there was provisional agreement that:

- A rough chestnut fence just inside the wall should form the boundary between the bottom gate and the lower water feature
- The new access path from the lower gate should have two flights of wooden steps, with a handrail (chestnut) on the lower/steeper flight
- That the gate (preferably a new one matching the small gate into the garden from the footpath to the Leechwell) should be positioned level with the front of the Heath Way houses
- That SHDC would pay for the fence, path and steps but that the cost of the gate should be split between SHDC, the LGA and the Heath Way residents
- That a simple rope with a notice saying "Private" should be used to block the public from the private path at the back of the houses

There was some discussion about the new gate, but it was agreed that John Churchill should be asked to quote for the gate before a decision was taken.

Action: Dave

7. Feedback on Lantern Fundraiser

While everyone that the fundraiser was well organised, colourful and very enjoyable. However, it was felt that the music was at times too noisy and that it did (slightly) run over the 9.30pm deadline. It was agreed that the organisers of future events should be asked to limit the use of amplifiers and be prepared to turn down the volume if asked by local residents.

8. Activities

Roma felt these were running very well at present.

9. AOB

Dave mentioned that Matt Harvey was the guest speaker at the TotSoc AGM (to be held at the United Free Church in Fore Street on October 4th. starting at 7pm (Matt will be on stage around 7.30).

**NEXT MEETING: 7pm, TUESDAY 16th October, Totnes Fire Station (Pool Project Meeting)
7pm, Tuesday 13th November, Totnes Fire Station (all other LGA Matters).**

Jill Tomalin: Pool Project Status Report

Phil McMahon has now responded to the queries put to him by John Clipson. I have sent a copy of Phil's email to John in case it prompts him to think of anything left uncovered.

At our meeting next week, I would like to propose that the committee consider whether it would be better for the Pool project to now be taken forward by the LGA committee rather than carried forward by a subcommittee. Most people are on both, particularly now that Shirley has returned to the LGA committee, and it seems silly to continue a parallel path. We will then need to set up a special meeting (or an extended agenda item at the imminent meeting) to pull together who is doing what to take this forward. Namely,

- a) we need to prepare the submission now for EH; and
- b) we need to map out the project in terms of preparing detailed plans, getting full costings, and then fund raising as necessary.

Jeannette and Shirley are willing to put together estimates of the costings for hedging, unspecified small trees, ground cover plants, shrubs and wild flower plugs etc. We will also need to obtain estimates for the pool repairs, seats, paths, pipe, spout, seating area, gate and any other elements of the garden. My reading of Phil's email is that a simple planting plan is all that is necessary for EH with minimum planting detail mapped out (which we have already determined). However we will need to come up with a fully costed project plan for ourselves.

Shirley and Jeannette have been considering how and when we should implement changes in the garden (thank you both). They had undertaken to prepare greater detail on planting and costing as a first stage while we were waiting for EH to come back to us. They have concluded that:

1. The whole pool area- including the new additional area inside the hazel- will need at least 2 heavy doses of weedkiller (now and next spring 2013) and full clearing of roots etc before anything can be planted in the area. ***We need to organise this with Keith if SHDC are to do first treatment this autumn.***

2. Full planting of the area cannot begin before autumn 2013- or more likely Spring 2014, The hard landscaping will also need to be done before then.

3. They propose that we should consider

- a) removing the current willow hedge ASAP and repositioning the wooden fence and gate on the new pool garden boundary. Would SHDC be willing to do this for us? i.e. there will be a lot of debris to remove and possibly some deeper digging involved.

- b) The hurdle fence (not willow) could be put in place ASAP- and this could be done as an LG workshop. Their size and how they will be fixed to the fence, needs consideration. *(Shirley wonders now if we really need a hurdle fence at all? She suggests the current fence on its own might be a better option- it makes a secure boundary and could be planted with fast growing honeysuckle etc. Less costly?? Also more likely to get the hedge planted this year if only the fence to move??)*

- c) The new hedge could be planted this autumn if the above were done in time or wait until 2013. The hedging will be planted as small 'whips' so they would have an extra start to get going before the garden is in use.

Finally, it is with regret that I have let Jim know that I have decided to stand down from the LGA because of the pressure of work, mainly for the Town Council which is only going to get worse! (I have also decided to step down from the Preservation Trust for the same reasons) I hope that this will prove a good time for me to depart - and do not intend to simply drop everything and vanish at the flick of a switch. I am confident we can map out a plan which everyone on the LGA feels able to contribute to and make happen.

Jill

From: Phil.McMahon@english-heritage.org.uk
To: tomalinmandj@hotmail.com
Date: Mon, 10 Sep 2012 11:00:22 +0100
Subject: Leechwell proposals

Dear Jill,

I have now had an opportunity to look at the proposed works for the Leechwell. Although none of the proposed works present any in-principle issues, you are correct in anticipating that SMC will be required. As I noted in my previous email, EH welcomes the proposals to repair the pool and bring it back into good condition, having previously advised South Hams DC on proposals which were sadly unrealised.

Looking first at the proposed alterations to the Leechwell structure:

- repair interior lime render to depth of 450mm - no problem, but we would wish to agree a suitable render spec to ensure the long-term success of the work.
- lower existing water outlet by 75mm & move existing water entry pipe from side to original centre entry point in line with leat - shouldn't cause any problems, but we will need to see detailed proposals
- new entry pipe to terminate in granite or terracotta sculpture - we should be able to agree a principle for this- I advise that the design is kept simple, so that the spout sits well with the simple form of the pool.
- lay recycled flat stones to match existing in band c.500mm wide around pool - no problem but we would like to see & approve the proposed pattern of lay.
- You are correct in that this works to the historic structure will need to be undertaken by a suitably experienced, and preferably conservation-accredited, contractor. EH are unable to recommend contractors, but we understand that the Conservation Officers at S Hams DC will be able to refer you to contractors who have undertaken good quality work locally.

Landscaping - as with the proposed spout, the key here is simplicity in design. EH would want to approve the landscaping proposals, which although not impacting upon the fabric of the monument, do have a material impact upon its setting. Of course, the current, neglected setting is not desirable and so we welcome your plans to improve the area around the well, in addition to repairing the structure itself. The location of any tree plantings will be important, as you are aware, to avoid root penetration into the pool over time.

I recommend that you submit the SMC application together with full supporting information, such as plans, drawings etc. We will want to approve the render specification to ensure it will stand the test of time, so please submit a draft spec by your chosen contractor, which I will then run past our conservation architect for approval.

Please submit the application in hard copy to South West Casework, English Heritage, 29 Queen Square, Bristol, BS1 4ND - there's a 42 day statutory consultation period for SMCs, from the date they are received, in recognition of ongoing workloads.

I hope this advice is clear, however if you have any queries please don't hesitate to give me a call on 07900 138612.

best wishes

Phil

Phil McMahon Inspector of Ancient Monuments

Keith Rennells – Greenspace Projects Officer – 18th September 2012

Project	Actions/position
Site safety	Option of 'soft' rather than 'hard' landscaping solution to H&S concerns agreed by SHDC. GM team has sprayed off vegetation. No second application required. Now membrane can be put down to suppress weeds. 21 rosa partridge have been ordered and will be delivered Nov for planting. Mahonia can be planted earlier, and GM team will attempt to move stones into position as well. Rosemary will be planted along length of wall.
Bird and bat boxes	Proposal from Tim Pollard for 2 tit boxes to go on taller trees and sparrow box to go on end of shed; Mark Capper (GM team) will install in due course – autumn/winter task
Entrance signs	SHDC will amend signs to ensure consistency in messages – ie, about cycling! Should be ready by end of September
Herb garden info panel	Has been installed and looks very good!
Hedge tree	The leaning tree in the new hedge line adjacent to the lawn near the entrance to the site will be re-fastened with a taller stake by GM team.
Path maintenance	There has been a second stronger application of weedkiller where grass growing into rolled stone path surface. Will be top dressed and rolled this autumn, where eroded.
Japanese knotweed	Already in the annual schedule for treatment– gradually being eradicated
Grounds Maintenance plan	Has been adjusted to accommodate additional cuts alongside path. Proposal to switch from single to twice yearly cut of meadow , as by mid to late August meadow has gone over. Another proposal to remove two wildlife banks from GM schedule to allow volunteer monitoring/maintenance of species.
Increasing meadow diversity	Proposal to introduce yellow rattle to two areas of meadow to try and break up dominance by coarse grass species. It is a hemi-parasitic herbaceous annual plant that gains some of its nutrients from the roots of neighbouring plants. Encouraging Yellow Rattle to grow in hay meadows greatly increases biodiversity by restricting grass growth and thereby allowing other species to thrive. The seeds are spread very effectively by traditional hay-making practices. It can be cultivated by scarifying the surface of the ground with a fork or similar, then sowing onto short grass, 0.5 to 1 gram of seed per square metre. Yellow Rattle seed is short-lived and should always be sown in the autumn, using seed harvested that year. Then, keep grass short for beginning of March when seedlings establish. Thereafter, the grass should not be cut until the end of July to allow the Yellow Rattle to flower and go to seed, then cut short. Proposed autumn workshop event? Keith/Tim to lead?
Hedgerows	The natural established hedge at the south (far) end of the garden and the newly planted hedge along the west side of the garden are thriving, and fall within the GM plan as 'hedge bank', with an annual trim at the end of the season.
Willows	3 no. willows planted in SE corner are poorly staked and leaning, so will be re-staked appropriately. These are due to be pollarded this autumn/winter.
Magnolia	The magnolia tree on the lawn has died – the ground conditions may be too harsh. This tree is 'out of contract' now, so is not the responsibility of the contractors, so can be removed. Opportunity for 'donated' tree to replace?