

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING
21st April 2021 in the Leechwell Garden and Leechwell Cottage

PRESENT: David Mitchell (Chair), Shirley Prendergast, Sue Holmes, , Roma Church,

1. APOLOGIES: Keith Rennells, Philip Strange, Lu Overy, Jeannette Willington

2. MINUTES: the minutes of the meeting on March 2021 were largely ignored!

3. MATTERS ARISING

Before the meeting started we all admired the work done (by Sue?) planting the herb garden.

4. STICKS ANND WASTE

We did discuss this (raised by David Martin). Unfortunately I did not take notes and cannot remember what if anything we decided to do!

5. WHAT TO DO ABOUT BAD BEHAVIOUR?

Possibly because of lockdown, the school holidays and the very large number of visitors, there have been several incidents lately – a fire up near the pool, dogs, a lot of sticks scattered over the garden etc. We discussed what if anything could be done. Sue pointed out that we had very little power to enforce the rules of the garden expressed in the notices on the wall (apart from closing the garden).

It was agreed that we should try to keep a log of incidents. Sue mentioned that the Town Council intends to open Castle Meadow (now it will no loner be hosting sheep) which may reduce the pressure on the garden.

6. THE SANDPIT

Shirley had met with Earthwrights to discuss the planned fence and hedge and is expecting them to give us a quote. She noted that several parents had objected to the idea. After some discussion it was agreed that we should hold a consultation/exhibition in a gazebo in the garden (just as we did when planning the new play facilities). That would allow us to explain the response for the fence and get public support for it (and perhaps get some parents to help with the garden or even join the committee). Some time in late May (bank holiday?) seemed a good idea.

Dave noted that he had written a short article about the sandpit for the next issue of CONTACT (the twice-yearly TOTSOC newsletter) which will come out this month.

7. NEW NOTICES

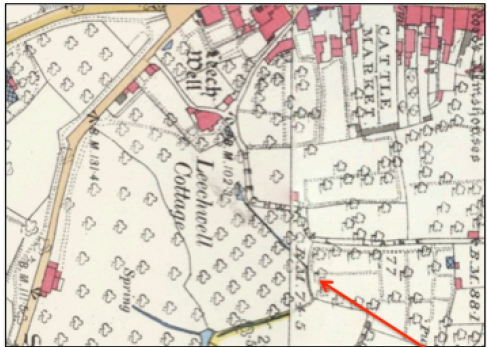
A couple of weeks ago Shirley drafted a notice to replace the one in the herb garden. It contained a brief history of the garden and when he shoed it to Dave they jointly decided that Dave would create a new (large – A2) notice to go on the wall outside the garden that would describe the history of the garden and Shirley would create on got the herb garden that focussed on that. An early draft of Dave's document is attached below.

NEXT MEETING: No date was agreed at the meeting.

Action: Dave to circulate date

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A Short History of the Leechwell Garden¹

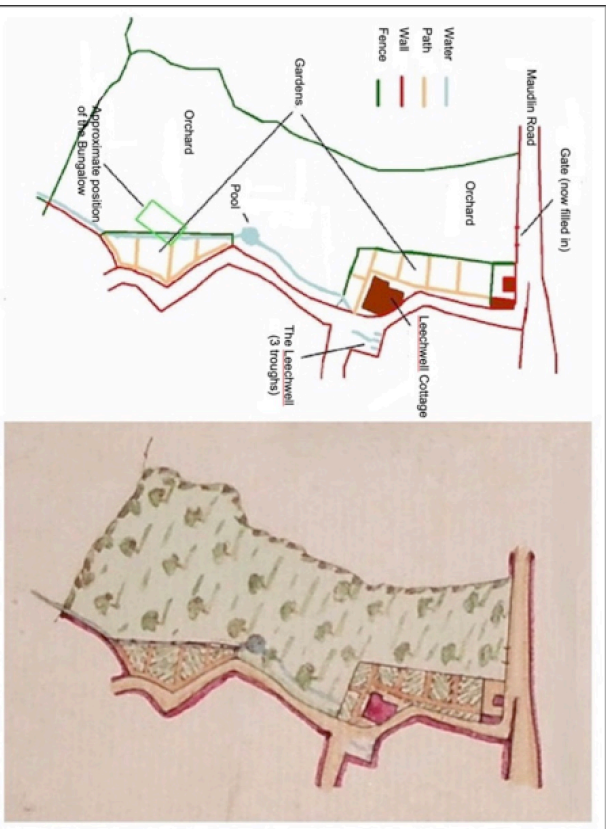


If you were standing where you are now one hundred and fifty years ago, Tohnes would have looked very different. As you can see from the 1889 Ordnance Survey map, on the left most of the land, around you, was occupied by orchards and gardens. There were no roads nearby, just the walled footpath leading to the Leechwells and then up to Leechwell Street and Maudlin Road.¹

What is now the Leechwell Garden was then part of the garden of Leechwell Cottage stretching all the way from where you are standing up to Maudlin Road.¹

In that garden you'd have seen a stream, fed by water from the Leechwell, running through the garden and then on its way to the Dart via the back gardens of the houses in Moorashes.¹

Below is a survey of the garden in 1873, which shows the stream and the pool, shown here as round, though the Ordnance Survey map above shows the familiar triangular shape.¹



Over the next sixty years little changes in the garden but in the 1930's the owner sold Leechwell Cottage and higher half of the garden and built himself a bungalow on the lower half, roughly where the pergola is now. Though the water still flowed through the garden it was now largely piped underground.¹

In the 1980's the South Hams District Council (SHDC) acquired the land, along with some of the nurseries in the southern area with the intention of developing them. The link road from the Lamb down to the Plains was constructed and the car parks were established. What is now the garden became completely over-grown (see left) and the bungalow was used as temporary accommodation for the homeless.¹



Over the next twenty years various plans were proposed until, in 2003, a proposed development by SHDC (incorporating a multi-storey car park replacing the Nursery Car Park) raised so much local opposition that a local group, DOS ('Design Our Space'), persuaded SHDC to allow them to conduct a six-month consultation with the people of Tohnes to decide what should be done.¹

The result of the consultation was a plan produced for DOS by architects Harrison Sutton for some 54 units on four housing sites (one each side of the Lamb and one each side of Heath Way) and a new public open space – the Leechwell Garden. Once planning permission was obtained, SHDC awarded the development plan to Midas Homes. The bungalow was demolished and while the houses were being built, the DOS Open Space group held consultations and exhibitions to produce proposals for the garden.¹

These were turned into this detailed plan by Charlotte Rathbone of Rathbone Associates in 2006.¹

Once the houses in were finished in 2009 and Midas had left the site, SHDC landscaped the garden, forming the pools, waterfalls and the bridge. DOS transformed into the Leechwell Garden Association (LGA) and obtained a £50,000 Lottery Grant to 'furnish' the garden with plants, seating, gates, a play structure, the pergola and the 3 guardians' sculpture. Finally, in October 2010 the garden was opened to the public.¹

The running and day-to-day maintenance of the garden are shared between SHDC and the LGA. Over the years, the LGA has raised an additional £100,000 from grants, donations and the sale of plants and books to pay for various improvements - new play facilities with a sandpit, a third gate, repairs to the paths, more seating, a solar-powered watering system and of course new plants, shrubs and tree.¹