

Elford Hall Gardens - Newsletter 64 - September 2022

Newsletter No 64! I feel a Beatles song coming on....."When I get older, losing my hair...". Forgive me. I'm feeling a little nostalgic... I began my first newsletter in 2009 but since moving out of the village, I've found it increasingly difficult to keep up to date with goings on at the walled garden and so it has been more of a challenge to keep my newsletters interesting and relevant now that I'm not so 'hands on'! So, I've decided that it is time to hand on the responsibility to a new team and to make this my final issue.

First, can I say that I've really enjoyed writing the newsletters. It has given me much pleasure over the years and I've really appreciated the comments made by many readers. My newsletters have travelled far and wide, going to France, USA, Australia and as far as St Helena in the South Atlantic. I hope that they've kept our many 'Friends of the Walled Garden' informed about how the extraordinary Walled Garden Project has been progressing.



I'm sure that the new newsletter team will continue to keep people well informed. The trio will be Jill Henty, Hilary Porter and Allan Hayes. I look forward to seeing them develop the newsletters in their own style and will be keeping in touch with the project that has been such a big part of my life since retiring in 2009. I wish them and the project every success...

I managed to get Jill and Allan to pose for me during a recent visit but didn't have a photo of Hilary to hand. Watch out for future editions!

Outstanding Again!

Every year, we enter a 'competition' run by the Royal Horticultural Society called 'It's Your Neighbourhood'. There are no prizes, but we do get a visit from judges who know a little about gardening and community projects like ours. They offer encouragement, advice and make suggestions about future development. They are usually impressed with the project and that gives our selfless volunteers a real boost.



This year we have again achieved the 'OUTSTANDING' award. Quite an accolade, especially considering the difficulties of the difficult weather this summer (when judging was done!). We have now achieved this level for several years and that really serves to increase the pressure for next year and future years when we try to maintain our high standards. This year's awards ceremony has been postponed due to it falling within the period of mourning for our dear departed Queen

Volunteers always have their say!

With the project, we feel that it is really important for the volunteers who give their time and energy to be able to voice their opinions about the project and its' future direction. We like them to 'own' the project so we try to hold regular forums where ideas can be shared. During the height of the Covid pandemic, it was difficult to hold such meetings but, now things seem safer for us to gather in numbers, it has been possible to reconvene these invaluable forums.



The volunteers pictured above are those that were able to attend the most recent forum, where many useful decisions were made and where volunteers agreed to focus their attention on specific areas or tasks within the project as a whole. The question of volunteer numbers was raised and recruitment is currently a priority. Volunteering is very rewarding and a great way of meeting new people. It doesn't have to be a big commitment and doesn't require committing on a regular basis or for long hours. Our volunteers come and go as they please and only do the things that they want to do. Great knowledge, great skill or great physical strength is not required - things are very free and easy amongst our volunteer team. If you or someone you know would like to know more, then just pop along and chat to the volunteers who are there - they are a lovely bunch of really friendly folk!

And, seeing the team photo above, I discover that I indeed DID have a photo of Hilary - one of your new newsletter editorial team. So, here it is!



Cider with Rosie?

In recent years, a valuable asset to the project has been the production of cider (and some perry) from our own orchard fruits. The 2021 harvest has produced a strong cider and this is now bottled and on sale and work has already begun to prepare the fruit from the 2022 harvest. The harvest has been very productive this year, with plenty of fruit for the next batch of delicious cider. A small amount of the 2020 vintage bottling is available for sale at the barn alongside the 2021 bottling, which is apparently 'very tasty'!



Plum Job?

The hot dry summer has made vegetable production a bit difficult this year as most watering has to be done by hand. However, stone fruits in the orchard have done well with a good crop of plums, gages and damsons and you may be lucky enough to find some of these on the produce table if you visit soon.

Your carriage awaits... its final touches

The Farm cart renovation team continue to make good progress. All 4 wheels are now complete and most of the cart undercarriage (left) is ready for work to be done on the flat bed of the cart before it is finally all put together ready to go! It has been a mammoth effort but testament to the skills of the volunteers who have worked on this renovation. Perhaps they should be on TV in The Repair Shop so their skills can be admired by a wider audience!



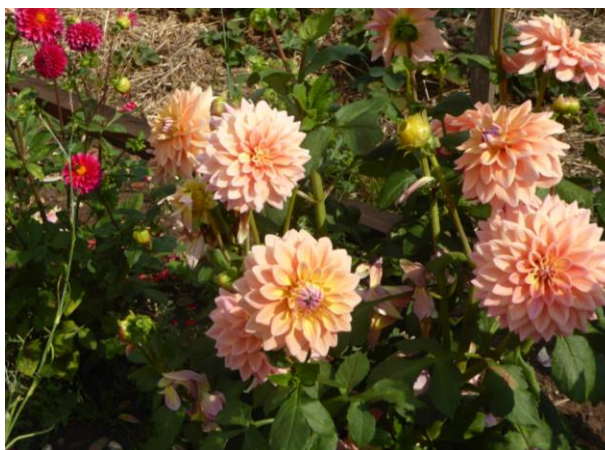
The other 'cart' on display at the garden is, of course, the Camioncito, still serving fantastic coffee and other delights to visitors - and much appreciated it is too!

Seeing IS believing...

Despite the dryness this summer, the garden still achieved its OUTSTANDING award and there is still much to see when you visit. The recent return to wetter weather has seen significant

recovery and a return to a greener look. There is still plenty to see and to appreciate as the gallery below shows so get along soon and enjoy while the sun is still warm!

September Gallery



Delightful Dahlias



Architectural teasel heads glowing in the autumn sunshine



Above, Rob Bosswell, our very own 'honey monster' is extracting this season's honey from the hives in the orchard. This will shortly be available to purchase.
Right, native cyclamen looking sturdy and below some of next year's perry - still on the tree!



So, that's about all from me folks. Please continue your strong support for the Elford Hall Garden Project in whatever way you can.

My best wishes to you all,

Roger

There's more.... Read on!

Just as I was about to sign off, an email arrived from Jill Henty with some pictures taken this week so I've added a few to this final issue! Here we have **CIDER IN THE MAKING**



The fruit pulping machine

The pulp press

The chief taster

Trugs full of freshly pulped apples

Next years cider



Masters of the Dark Arts at work - can you hear the rhythmic chanting? The stroking of the chin is an essential part of the ceremony, as is the fist clenching ritual

Now that is definitely IT



A bit more chin stroking should just about do it. Yep, that's just enough...