

Elford Hall Gardens – Newsletter 63 – July 2022

What a summer we are having! Here at the walled garden it has been a real challenge to keep everything watered in these hot, dry and often windy conditions. The size of the site means that often watering has to be done by hand using watering cans. The allotments have access to taps which bring water from the water tower in the corner of the walled area but this is gravity fed and once one tap is open, the pressure drops and water flow slows down. If two taps are open, the flow slows to a trickle so considerable patience is required if you have a large area to water! Places like the sensory garden are so far away from the water tower that at the best of times the water supply is lamentable and watering cans become the only viable option. Consequently, some of the plants are beginning to look a bit distressed! However, a week of rain would soon repair the situation and, with school holidays approaching, the weather is almost certain to break!!!



The Royal Jubilee

Celebrations in June saw the unveiling of a commemorative plaque of a suitably rustic nature (see if you can find it next time you visit) and Alan Hayes, our fruit expert has grafted a special apple tree from an original tree called Queen Cox which is currently in its second year of growth and looking strong! A mere whip - persnapper, in fact!



Speaking of apples, it looks likely that there will be a bumper crop this year, which will be welcome news for our cider makers and - later on - for our cider drinkers! Last years vintage will soon be on sale!

If you plan to visit soon, you can't fail to be impressed by the roses in the rose garden. The colours are brilliant and the scent is amazing.



Hot weather is taking its toll and individual flowers aren't lasting long but there are fresh buds waiting to burst forth!





The new gates to the materials store area are now completed and fully painted thanks to Steve Clarke. Whilst he was away on holiday recently, a new sign mysteriously appeared on the gates so now everyone knows whose fault it is if anything goes wrong with them!

Work continues on the cart restoration programme. The necessary bits and pieces are slowly being gathered together ready for re-assembling. The wheels are now all

constructed and awaiting their steel rims. All of the work done on the cart has presented volunteers with a steep learning curve but rising to the challenge is a walled garden speciality! Fitting the first rim to the first wheel involved a bit of trial and error, it has to be said. The team assembled and a fire was lit beneath the steel rim before it was carefully lifted over the waiting wheel and eventually it was eased into place, burning the wood as it slipped into place.



There were some anxious moments, and first attempts did not go entirely to plan but the rim was re-heated and was eventually got into place before being doused by much water. This not only made the metal shrink into position but it also put out the flames in the burning wheel!

The original cart, when it was in general use, carried school children around the village for Mayday festivities. 2023 is a special anniversary of this event so the plan is to have the cart finished by May 2023 so that it can be used to re-enact the celebration



Smug smiles now that the first fully finished rimmed wheel is cool enough to touch.
How cool is that?

Phil Kellett continues his expert restoration of the vine house. The old Victorian lime mortar had become much degraded over the years so the old brickwork has to be carefully taken apart, cleaned off and the bricks can then be sympathetically replaced using lime mortar. Phil is being supervised by the Flowerpot Men (the older amongst you may remember them!) and, of course, they are being closely watched by Little Weed. Happy days!



As well as the Flowerpot Men, other unusual items have begun appearing at the garden! Down by the river a strange sea creature has materialised! We now have our very own seahorse, sculpted by Tony Devitt. It's quite hard to miss and is made from local oak, commissioned in memory of Jayne Griffiths (1959-2021) who spent most of her life living and working in Lichfield. Jayne loved spending time at Elford Hall Walled Garden - and being by the sea. An information sheet about seahorses can be found on the produce table near to the Head Gardener's House. They are really fascinating.

Here's Tony at work adding the final touches to his artwork



I'm sure that all readers are well aware of the threats that Global Warming bring to the natural world right across the globe. We're trying to do our bit here in Elford by offering sanctuary to a threatened species from cooler climes. Our new arrival from the north is far from their natural habitat but is settling in well. He's friendly, likes a bit of fuss but is finding this month's heatwave a bit challenging.



And left is the finished piece, freshly oiled

So, here he is! He's currently living in the barn with another friendly old growler - Pete Kennedy - and they seem to be getting on quite well. Pete says his craft skills aren't up to scratch yet - but he's a quick learner!

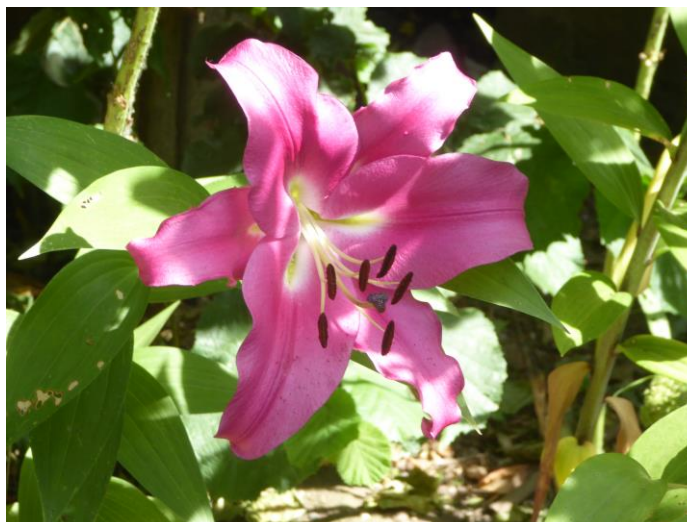
The bear doesn't have a name yet (suggestions on a postcard please!).



This weather is great for boules of course. June and Roger send a reminder that the very social Boules evenings are continuing in the Walled Garden on the following Friday evenings: 22nd July, 5th August, 19th August, 2nd September, and 16th September. Everyone is welcome. It is free. No experience or equipment is necessary, but do remember to bring your picnic and favourite tippie along!

A few days ago we had a visit from the Royal Horticultural Society judges who were assessing the project for their 'It's Your Neighbourhood' award. In recent years we have always done really well in this assessment and this years judges seemed really impressed with what they saw and with what is being achieved by this volunteer led community project so we are hopeful of a good result for 2022. We will find out in September! Despite the dry conditions, there

is plenty of colour and lots to be seeing at the garden, as the next photographs will show. They do look better if you can get here in person, of course!



Two from the Sensory Garden



The project is ALWAYS looking for more volunteers to help out with maintaining this free community garden. Fresh air, good company, gentle exercise can all be yours and all it costs is a little bit of your time every now and then.

What's not to like?

Well, that's about it from me for this issue. I hope you have enjoyed reading it! Best wishes to you, Roger

