

# HILL CLOSE GARDENS

The hidden hedged gardens of Warwick



May 2017

## WRAG-time moves

Hill Close welcomes our new trainee gardener Jacky Walsh, below, who comes to us on the Work and Retrain as a Gardener (WRAG) scheme. Jacky's placement is part funded this year by the Women's Farm and Garden Association (WFGA) and the National Gardens Scheme (NGS), and she will be with us two days a week for twelve months studying



all areas of horticulture. Jacky has already gained her RHS Level 2 Diploma in Horticulture from Pershore College so has a good foundation to build upon.



Our previous trainee Alison Taylor has now completed her traineeship and received her certificate from WFGA Regional co-ordinator Liz Harrison-Hall during a propagation day run at Hill Close. Alison will remain part of the garden team as she continues to work part-time in the gardens.

### Volunteering opportunities

- Come and help plan and deliver learning opportunities, and host nursery and school visits as well as pre-school and holiday activities (some experience of working with children, professional or voluntary, is beneficial but not essential)
- Work in the gardens, including propagation, nursery work and plants sales (expert garden knowledge is not required)
- Help in our café and welcome visitors at weekends
- Undertake general administration such as publicity and website management

For more details on these and other opportunities, come down for a chat, or call us on 01926 493339 or visit our website at [www.hillclosegardens.com](http://www.hillclosegardens.com)

**The Auricula theatre** has been dismantled and will be moved to Plot 24, although slightly smaller.

*In its place on Plot 23 will be a new shelter built in memory of Patricia Fox. This is based on the design of a shelter which was in George Cadbury's garden and now in the Birmingham Botanical Garden. It has been altered slightly to make it compatible with the existing summerhouses in the Gardens.*

## New Treasurer

Steve Warr is our new Treasurer and joined the Trustees in March this year. He is a qualified accountant with a wealth of experience in the banking sector, mainly in risk management. A graduate from Oxford and Harvard Business School, he trained with Price Waterhouse before joining Abbey National and then moved to Allied Irish Banks.



He is also Treasurer for The Open Spaces Society, Henley-on-Thames, the oldest conservation charity in England and Wales, and campaigns to preserve and extend commons, greens and footpaths. It operates through a network of volunteer 'Local Correspondents'.

## New Teashop Supervisor

After a long search we are pleased to announce a new Teashop Supervisor for Hill Close, replacing Teresa Thomas who left us last autumn. Susan Garrett's first day was April 1<sup>st</sup> when the teashop opened for its weekend season for 2017. Susan joins us having most recently been in charge of the café in All Saints Parish Church, Leamington Spa.

Her duties will include managing the running of the teashop at weekends and for special occasions such as Easter and summer evening events, as well as developing the teashop rota of volunteers who play such an important part of the visitor experience at Hill Close.



## Over Easter...



Easter reminded us of our Victorian past with a display of three very elegant dresses in the Lammas room (*one shown on left*); and in the gardens were some of the interesting old tools which have been donated over the years.

In the potting shed were photos of the Chadband family and of George Mills.

There was also a **Victorian Quiz** to mull over during refreshments. Can do better than our visitors?

## Coming up...

This summer there are a mixture of some of our favourite events and something new:

- *Delight to see Maypole dancing on 6 May.*
- *A return of an evening concert of Music and song with Katie Leaver on 24 June.*
- *Later another favourite event of an open air performance of Murder on the Terrace on 25 July. Do make a note to book tickets, as last year there was a sell-out for this event.*
- *Something new is a major event of Arts in the Gardens on 18-19 August. View and try some of the various arts and crafts which will be demonstrated in the gardens. And take the opportunity to listen to poetry and storytelling for both adults and children.*

### Victorian Quiz

1. How many years did Queen Victoria reign?
2. What is the main fruit in Eve's Pudding?
3. How many furlongs in a mile?
4. What was isinglass used for and made from?
5. What were Victorians trying to control when they ground black pepper and moist sugar together, adding fresh milk and stirring as necessary?
6. How many shillings in a florin?
7. What did Thomas Edison recite during his first recording of the human voice in 1877?
8. What popular invention came from the American George Eastman in 1888?
9. In 1865, the government passed the Locomotives on the Highways Act which limited speeds on the open roads and in towns: to what speeds?
10. What garden ornament was introduced from Germany in the 1860s?

No prize. Just for fun. Answers in The Lammas Room.

## You're never too young

**O**ur LaCE Team at Hill Close has gone full speed ahead over the winter months, in spite of the dark, wet weather.

It takes a proper downpour to keep us indoors. Fortunately the children attending our regular session come well wrapped up and wellie-booted, all prepared to work in the children's garden and to jump in rain puddles. They find the walk round Hill Close Garden interesting at any time of year and notice details that adults may miss.

Our monthly **Grow and Explore Drop-in** (second Thursday of the month from 9.00-11.30am) introduces young children to learning and playing outdoors. Activities include exploring the gardens, arts and crafts, digging and planting, water play and much more. Both children and adults benefit from the opportunity to talk and work side by side. Our next Drop in is on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

We welcome pre-school and primary school groups, exploring the changing seasons, planting, growing and tasting everything from potatoes to strawberries. Details of events and special one-off sessions are to be found on the Hill Close annual programme leaflet or on our website.

One date for the diary is **Boggling Bugs and Curious Critters** on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Explore the gardens, magnifying glass in hand, and become an Insect Inspector, creating your own creature to take home.

## New teaching grant

Hill Close Gardens has recently been awarded a grant from Warwick District Council to create a new programme for pre-school children and their parents, focussing on developing early language and communication skills.

The sessions will help parents to learn new skills in a fun way, using songs, stories and play activities, developing confidence and exploring practical ways of interacting with children.

As with all our family sessions, the activities will take place outside wherever possible, using the gardens as a wonderful opportunity to introduce and practice new vocabulary and share new experiences in words. The sessions will run for six weeks over the summer term and the next Newsletter will cover this new venture in more detail.

## A bit from the Centre Manager...

After a busy beginning to 2017 we are now heading toward our summer season. The Centre has seen the installation of new LED lighting in the visitor office, hallway and kitchen, in line with the green ethos of the building.

### Good-bye

After 11 years at Hill Close Bob Holland will be retiring. Bob has overseen all the cleaning here at the Centre and kept the Centre presentable to everyone who uses it. Bob has seen many changes over the years and has done a great job in keeping everything looking its best. We wish him well in his retirement.

### Coming Up

We have a great line up of events for 2017 including a new event 'Arts in the Gardens' on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> August including arts & crafts workshops, stalls, poetry, music and more. Di Brennen is leading this: if you know anyone who might be interested in taking part please contact her via the Centre Manager.

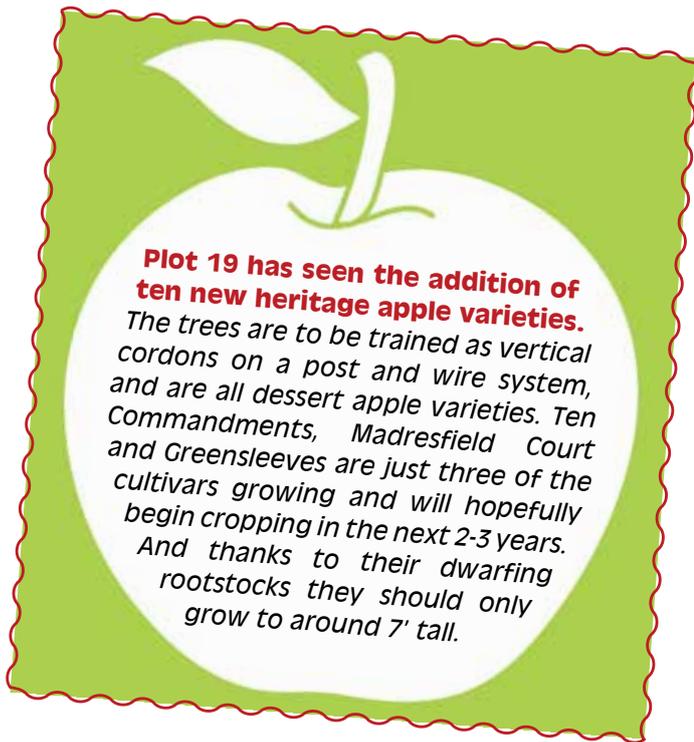
## Membership renewals

Have you recently renewed your membership? If not, now is the time to do it, or you will miss out on the next Newsletter, as well as the 10% discount on plants and produce.

Hill Close Gardens is now open every day. You can come on a busy special weekend event or, if you prefer, you can come on a quiet day and enjoy the peace and quiet of the gardens when the loudest noise is the chirping of the birds.

The café is open at weekends and, on weekdays, we have a new machine for coffee and hot chocolate: just put a pod in the machine and you get a delicious drink. Or there is hot water for you to brew your own from a variety of teas.

Your membership is very much appreciated. It is helpful for us when we apply for the funding which is necessary for us to continue with the development of the Gardens.



### In hot water!

We have received a new piece of equipment to help keep our chrysanthemum collection healthy. A Hot Water Bath has been purchased with a bursary provided by Brother Printers and administered by Plant Heritage.



Chrysanthemums can suffer from eelworm and white rust particularly if stressed or grown too closely together. The delicate process of heat treating them should help to control and pests and diseases without resorting to chemicals.

### DNA testing

It may be a surprise to some that a few of the apples here in the gardens are unnamed or potentially wrongly named. To remedy this Hill Close has joined a number of orchards, under the banner of the Fruit ID Group, to undergo DNA testing of their apples and pears.

Leaf samples from 5 apples and 1 pear were sent to East Malling Research Institute for analysis. The results have come back but they were not as expected! One apple was positively named as Egremont Russet and two others were sports of both Bramley Seedling and Blenheim Orange. Unfortunately the final two apples were identical and unknown, probably just seedlings that have arisen in the garden.

The pear result was much more exciting: it has been identified as Pitmaston Duchess, a Worcestershire dessert variety that was bred in 1841. We will hopefully have a crop of these to offer in 2017.

*If any of you have called in on a Monday you may have been surprised to find Gary Leaver's duties being covered by our Assistant Gardener Alison Taylor. This is because Gary has returned to education and has enrolled on the Royal Horticultural Society's Master of Horticulture degree programme with the support of the Trustees of Hill Close. For the next three years he will be on site from Tuesday to Friday and will hopefully return full time in 2019 a much wiser (and older!) gardener.*

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