



New year, new adventures, new you

Join our friendly team of volunteers to provide fun activities for children and their families. We offer sessions that follow the seasons, encouraging children and their parents/carers to explore our gardens, as well as providing arts, crafts, digging, planting, harvesting and lots more.

You don't need to have experience in working with children, you just need to enjoy being with them. You don't have to commit to a regular slot; you just come and help on a day and at a time that suits you. You don't have to be good at art and crafts but you do need to be enthusiastic and be able to share with the children the wonders of learning and discovery in our magical gardens.

Most of the activities are outdoors so everyone comes dressed appropriately, ready to join in all the fun (and to jump in muddy puddles!) Interested? Please contact educationofficer@hcg.org.uk

Membership Update

Our membership at the end of the year is 796, which is 200 more than at the end of 2020. It is pleasing that many people are enjoying visits to the Gardens and discounts on plant sales and workshops. We have also been pleased to welcome members as new volunteers and if anyone else would like to join in volunteering, please let us know.

We rely on volunteers in all areas, doing a variety of jobs ranging from work in the garden and summer houses to admin



work in the Centre and work with children and families. We are sure that you will want to continue your membership when it expires.

When renewing please note that in April 2021 the entrance charge increased to £5 and membership subscription rates were increased to £18 for Individual, £27 for Joint and £33 for Family (2 adults bringing in children). At the same time, the period of membership was changed from a calendar year to 1 year from date of purchase.



Chrysanthemum 'Sunshine'

This tender chrysanthemum was given to HCG to look after by the Devon Plant Heritage group. There is a photo and record of this chrysanthemum in 1896 and its subsequent history until it was given to the Devon Group as the family (Mrs Mulford) felt it was of such historical importance.

This must be one of the oldest English chrysanthemums with a known provenance. It is late flowering with beautiful semi double flowers and needs to be grown in a cool glasshouse.

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**30-34 West Street,
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Tel/Fax: 01926 492 249**



Hill Close Gardens

The hidden, hedged gardens of Warwick



Spring 2022

Official Opening of The Bleasdale Room



George Plumtre CEO NGS at The Opening of The Bleasdale Room

The official opening of the Bleasdale Room by George Plumtre CEO National Gardens Scheme (NGS) on Friday 26th November 2021 was the culmination of the 'Transforming The Visitor Experience' (TVE) project funded by HLF and generously supported by Members and friends of the Gardens.

The purpose of this project was to give visitors an insight into the social history of Hill Close Gardens owned and used by the residents, tradespeople and shop owners who lived mainly in the centre of Warwick. This is one of the main reasons why the site is on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

This room gives visitors time to have a coffee, read about the people, the place and the plants and trees in the gardens

before they walk round the gardens. The video and display boards are backed up by the touch screens which enable visitors to focus on their particular interests.

Technology has been used to provide a guide to each plot using an app which visitors can download onto their Smart phones. For those who are not so technically minded there are display boards in each garden telling the history of owners and tenants of each garden.

At last there is facility to display, overseen by Mike Sheldon some of the historic garden tools and machinery which have been donated to the Trust by transforming George's potting shed (Plot 24) into a small museum. This space was used as pigsties, then by George

Miles and more recently as the potting shed which has now moved into a new wooden shed near the Head Gardeners office.

Chris Begg has been the project manager and has provided the impetus to keep the many strands of the project to a successful conclusion, despite the delays caused by Covid-19. There is still more work to be done on the touch screens which will always be in need of updating and entering additional material.

The work of the community engagement worker was suspended during Covid-19 and will be undertaken by Kate Coleman over the next six months.



Hill Close Gardens Trust
Bread and Meat Close
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Company registered in
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Registered Charity
Number 1085278

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The Childrens Tree

As the New Year begins, we also begin again by welcoming children and their carers back to the gardens. Each month we gather together and through a mixture of play, craft and storytelling delight in the beauty of Hill Close. Our monthly drop-in sessions ‘Grow and Explore’ support children to be curious about nature, learn how to care for the environment around them and connect with the natural world.

This year, we have chosen a special tree in the Children’s Garden which we will visit each month and record its journey by taking note of how the tree changes. As the seasons pass, we will watch to see

the creatures that visit and how the tree grows. As the weather and soil start to warm up, we will be preparing the raised beds ready for the children to plant their fruit and vegetables, something we have missed over the past two years. The mud kitchen will also be cleaned down and put out ready for those yummy mud pies and soil soup! Make sure you dress for all weathers, wrap up warm and don’t forget the wellies.

Our sessions are supported by a wonderful group of volunteers who give their time and share their wisdom but we are always looking for new volunteers to join our team – so do get in touch!



Opening Our Doors

Here at Hill Close Gardens, we are working on a project which aims to support and increase our engagement with the local community. For many local people, the gardens provide a safe space to connect with nature. Whether through volunteering, using the facilities for local events or visiting the gardens we are exploring new ways to work with you.

With the support of funding, our Engagement Officer is developing a number of new community events. Our first event will be a coffee morning on March 23rd, 10.00am – 12.00 when you can come along, visit the gardens and give us your views on your visit. We look forward to seeing you there. Keep an eye on our website and social media for more details about what we have planned.



Welcome Jen

Welcome to Jen Gates. Jen has been taken on here at the gardens to take care of our book-keeping. With her knowledge and skills we will be in a much better place moving forward.



Welcome Chris

Chris Wainwright has been with us here at the gardens for many years. She had headed our Children and Families group activities here as our Education Officer and while continuing in this role she has decided to join the team of Trustees.



Welcome John

Welcome to John Gates who is a Certified Chartered Accountant. John was appointed a Trustee and Hon Treasurer for the Trust in November. John is a founder member of Duo accountants.

From the Head Gardener

Winter work has been continuing and at times in some unseasonably high temperatures. We’ve been busy pruning the apple trees and tidying up the hedges here before the nesting season begins and had help from WRAGS trainees who came here on a Winter Apple Pruning Course in November. It’s always amazing how much growth is put on throughout the year and feels really satisfying once it’s all been done.

Some maintenance work is ongoing to improve access through the different plots and important repairs on the Summerhouses are also being carried out. We’re now focusing on Snowdrops

and getting those ready to display and to sell in the Nursery on Snowdrop Weekend as well as preparing spring bulbs.

I’m concerned we still haven’t had as many frosty days to reduce the over-wintering pests this winter but hopefully we’ll get some more before Spring finally springs. Last year saw a lot of Aphids and blackfly getting established early on and causing damage especially in the greenhouses, so hopefully numbers will be lower this year.

Our first Garden event of the year is Snowdrop Weekend on the 5/6 February. We’ll have displays of over 130 varieties

throughout the garden, as well as an indoor display. We also hope to have around 40 to 50 cultivators available for you to buy on the weekend. There will be drinks and food available in the Café. Open both days from 11 until 4. If you’re busy that weekend you can still catch the displays in the garden throughout the week in February and also on Saturday 19th February on Snowdrop Day, open 11 to 4.

Just to remind you we still have some Apple Juice available, produced from the apples here at Hill Close for £3.50 a bottle.

These are for sale in the Visitor Centre.

Congratulations

Richard Hawkins successfully completed his one-year WRAG training after spending two days a week at Hill Close Gardens obtaining a wide practical training in the many aspects of horticulture in the Gardens. He has also been studying for his RHS exams. We are delighted that he will be able to stay on for one day a week until June funded from the grant from Sainsbury 150 anniversary monies.

The Trust considers participation in the scheme as a valuable part of its commitment to training and education for all ages. It is also committed to raising the level of professional horticulturists. There is an extreme skills shortage in all aspects of the horticulture industry.

There is some doubt whether there will be a trainee this year because of the financial constraints after the last two years of Covid-19. The last two trainees have been funded by grants from the National Garden Scheme and the George Cadbury Trust.



From the Centre Manager

Through these frosty mornings a glimpse of what is on its way is visible in the gardens. The snowdrops are pushing through very quickly now and buds are appearing on the trees. This means one thing – we are gearing up for our snowdrop events and getting everything in place for the new season. Hill Close Gardens comes to life with nature so why not come down and welcome in

the spring. As Covid19 starts to pass we will again be welcoming new and old hirers to our Lammas room where people can enjoy parties/gatherings/business meetings/guided tours and a whole host of events.

We are continually grateful for your support over 2021 and look forward to an exciting 2022. We are still on the

lookout for a volunteer Events lead – if you are interested or know anyone who may like to take up this exciting post and join in the inner workings at HCG’s please do get in touch.

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