

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING
5th February 2020 6pm at the REconomy Centre

PRESENT: David Mitchell (Chair), Sue Holmes, Shirley Prendergast, David Martin, Philip Strange

1. APOLOGIES: Roma Church, Jeannette Willington, Frances Gilmore, Keith Rennells, Pete Taylor, Lu Overy,

Frances informed Dave that while she will be continuing to work in the garden as a volunteer on Mondays, she had decided to resign from the Committee. All thanked her for contributions over the years.

2. MINUTES: the minutes of the meeting of the 11th December 2019 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

None not mentioned below.

4. PATH REPAIR

CIVILS, the contractor doing the work, completed it today so the garden can re-open tomorrow (6th February). All agreed the path looked great.

4. WILDLIFE IN THE GARDEN

Philip had little to report except that his wife is a member of the local Global Harmony choir and they would like to perform in the garden, singing a set of songs about bees some time in the summer. Sue noted that this summer will be the 10th anniversary of the opening of the garden and perhaps the concert could form part of a celebratory event. It was agreed that when a date had been fixed we should go through the process of getting permission (and insurance) from SHDC.

5. FINANCES

Jeannette has completed the accounts for 2019. The main account balance was £5,026 at the end of December and the Pool Fund stands at £1,972.

6. POOL AREA ARCHAEOLOGY

Shirley had written a report (attached) on the visit by Steve Reed (Devon County archaeological adviser for the South Hams) on December 20th which has been sent to Steve and Phil McMahon. Following discussions the committee agreed with Shirley's suggestion that a two phase approach – first a dig investigating the existence of the original leat, followed by the work on repairing the pool – was best but that we should apply for scheduled monument consent for both phases at the same time to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary paperwork. We will need quite a bit for money to do the work but Roma has been looking at possible grants. It was also agreed that the matter should be progressed by separately rather than within normal LGA committee meetings

7. POOL AREA SEATING

Dave noted that we should look at possible seating in the pool area before too much more work is done there. It was agreed that two off-the-shelf 'park benches' would probably be best (rather than expensive one-off designs like the seating in the herb garden) and all agreed to look for possible candidates.

8. MAINTENANCE

Sue had produced a list of maintenance tasks (attached) that fall outside the tasks carried out by the volunteers. It was agreed we should prioritise the list and that Keith should be asked to determine which might be SHDC's responsibility.

Action: Keith to investigate

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5. AOB

Dave reported that he had collected a bag of compost donated by Caroline Coombes.

It was noted that the crab apple donated by Extinction Rebellion had been well-planted, looked healthy and was a fine addition to the garden.

Sue reported that due to persistent and massive dog-fouling in the Lamb Garden that Gardening for Health had been forced to stop operations.

On Monday 16th December, Keith will be moving the crab apple from the pool area into the garden.

Both Sue and Philip need keys to the gates and shed and it was agreed to remind Keith to get some from SHDC.

Action: Keith to contact SHDC

NEXT MEETING: 6pm on Wednesday March 11th in the REconomy Centre. Dave has already booked the room.

An archaeological investigation of the scheduled Immersion Pool in the Leechwell Garden, Totnes

Meeting with Steve Reed (Devon Senior Archaeological Advisor covering the South Hams)
23.12.19

Present: Steve Reed, Dave Mitchell, Roma Church, David Martin, Shirley Prendergast
(Draft SP 27.12.19)

Following meetings with Phil McMahon (Historic England) and on his recommendation, some of the LGA Committee met with Steve to discuss how to take forward the restoration of the pool which has been on hold for at least the last 16 years due to the continuing growth of Japanese knotweed in the area.

1. Current situation of the pool

The area directly around the pool has now been fenced off and reduced to 2 m - (the minimum required statutory boundary for a scheduled monument is 1m?) This excludes visitors- particularly children- from the deep water in the pool and the pool itself from accidental damage. A gate allows entry to the pool area where there is space for archaeological and restoration work to safely take place. SHDC are responsible for treating the knotweed, which is still active, and for the security and safety of the boundary fence.

2. The current plan for pool has two phases-

First, a preliminary *archaeological investigation of a possible leat* in the area where the water enters pool and higher up in garden of Leechwell cottage, followed by (and informed by the archaeology) *later restoration of the pool itself*. We are investigating the first of these phases.

3: Reasons why an archaeological investigation is needed.

- a) It should help to clarify the means by which the water has travelled from the Leechwell above and entered the pool at different periods in its history. Currently this is by a pipe leading from the Leechwell via Leechwell Lane. Earlier, according to documents from 1873, this appears to have been via a leat inside the garden of Leechwell Cottage.
- b) If there is evidence of a leat, this might help to determine how to proceed with the restoration of the pool. For example, one option might be to replace the current terracotta pipe with a restored or new leat for the water entering the pool.
- c) The archaeology may help to shed further light on the history and use of the pool. For example, is the current triangular pool the result of rebuilding an earlier circular industrial dyers pool dating from around 1840 (Collins 2007) or is it possibly something else?

4: Suggestions regarding an archaeological investigation:

- a) Scope: To include investigation of at least three areas- a 2m square area immediately adjoining pool and in addition one or two trenches across possible

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leat line within the garden of Leechwell Cottage above the boundary of the Leechwell Garden. Possibly involving a month or more of digging.

- b) Community Archaeology: We hope to involve the wider community as a continuing aspect of the way in which the garden has been developed and is supported and cared for so far. Initially we hope to involve Totnes KEVICC 6th form college.
- c) Specialised help. Need to involve *an archaeologist* (maybe £200 per day) to help with defining project, making application to Historic England for Scheduled Monument Consent and to The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for funding. They would lead and oversee the day to day process of a dig, including training, guidance and oversight. Any finds would have to be recorded and conserved. We will also need *specialist advice on identifying possible Japanese knotweed rhizomes* below soil level and how to dispose of them safely
- d) Suggest first consult with Brynn Morris and Colin Humphreys of *South West Archaeology* in Barnstaple. SWA are familiar with the pool having done prior archaeological assessment of the area in 2005.
- e) Gathering support for funding for a community dig via HLF. We will need to demonstrate community benefit by enlisting support ie from:
 - Local schools
 - Town Council
 - Museum Society
 - Local societies and groups
 - Devon Archaeological Society
 - District Authority
 - Gathering matched funding etc etc

Sue's Maintenance List

MAINTENANCE

Trim pergola climbers
Weed and fill in bed and border
Herb bed sign (more signs e.g. for guardians and pool?)
Trim wall blackberry
Cut back dead trees*
Willow structures cut back
Clean guardians
Tidy guardians' bed
Cut back hedges against Leechwell Cottage and Maudlin Rd*
Remove rubbish by compost bins
Turn compost bins
Cut back tree branches* particularly lower trees
Overgrown pond vegetation
Hedge height for houses?

REPAIR

Water on play structure
Broken bench
Pond overflowing

IMPROVEMENTS

Paint solar shed
More climbers for wildlife corridor
Cats easy access to sand
Edging to contain sand and to sit on 2nd picnic table
Bin inside garden
More planting in bank at back of houses
Move bicycle stands* to side of entrance
Update noticeboard and leaflet folder

LEECHWELL

Lower sign

*For SHDC?