

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING
4th April 2023 in the REconomy Centre

PRESENT: David Mitchell (Chair), Sue Holmes, David Martin, Lu Overy, Robert Vint, Ernesto Antonio

1. APOLOGIES: Shirley Prendergast, Paul Church

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES: the minutes of the meeting on 7th March 2023 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Dave has updated the “Who Made What” notice (adding the Carpenter Oak Picnic Table) and will get it printed.

4. IMPACT OF FAILED GRANT APPLICATIONS

We will have to find alternative sources of funds for the noticeboard, wildlife garden and top meadow area. Keith’s accident means that he will not be able to do much, though he may be able to find out if SHDC would be prepared to include the noticeboard in the list of information boards they are planning to produce. All hoped that Keith recovers quickly from his injuries.

Sue, Shirley and Dave have produced an early mockup of the noticeboard (see attached) that still needs quite a lot of work.

5. SAFETY ISSUES AND REPAIRS

After reminders from Sue and Dave, SHDC did fix the dangerously rotten play structure post and repaired the steps leading down to Susie’s Gate. However it was felt that (a) SHDC should have reacted much more quickly and (b) should have got Earthwrights to do the work since the play structure is less than 7 years old.

Dave agreed to draft a letter to Councilor John Birch about SHDC’s safety priorities.

6. FINANCES

Paul had emailed a bank statement showing we had £3165 in our account as of 7th March, but payments have been made to Ross since then.

7. ERNESTO’S CHARITY WALK

Ernesto has kindly agreed to give any donations or sponsorship money his walk in Spain raises to the LGA for the wildlife garden. He will set up a JustGiving page and he and Lu will make sure this is publicized (“Totnes Times”, “Totnes Directory”, Facebook, Instagram etc).

8. SUE’S WORKLOAD

Dave noted the enormous list of tasks that Sue carries out in the garden. All agreed that some of them should be carried out by other committee members. Several present took responsibility for items on the list.

9.AOB

None

10. NEXT MEETING: the next meeting will be held on Tuesday May 2nd, it will be held at the REconomy Centre, starting at 5:30pm).

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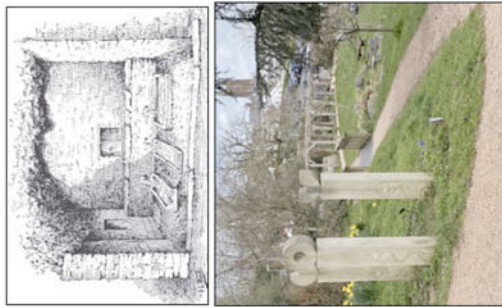
History of the Leechwell Area

This beautiful Garden was originally an old orchard. It takes its name from the nearby 13th Century Leechwell renowned for its healing qualities. The water from the well feeds the small triangular stone pool and the lower pools in the garden. The well and the stone pool have Scheduled Monument status. Leechwell Lane connects the town centre to the garden, the well and the site of the old Magdalene Leper Hospital (long demolished).

New Green Space

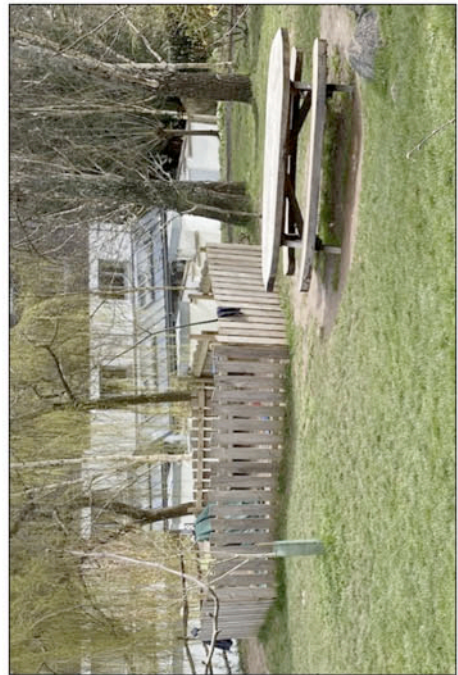
South Hams District Council (SHDC) acquired the old orchard as part of a 6-acre site for development. In 2003 their proposal for the site included 100 housing units and a multi-storey car park. A local group, **Design Our Space**, (DOS) opposed this plan and persuaded SHDC to let them undertake a 6-month public consultation to decide what should be done on the site. Over a thousand people took part in the consultation, rejecting a multi-storey car park, producing an award-winning design for 54 units of affordable and market housing and giving overwhelming support for the creation of a new Leechwell Garden on the site of the old orchard.

This provided the town with almost an acre of new green open space, the first in Totnes for over 100 years.



Design and Features

South Hams District Council carried out the basic infrastructure of the garden. Then, with continuing community consultation and involvement, the newly formed **Leechwell Garden Association (LGA)** and the **Rathbone Partnership** designed the special features such as seating, pergola, flower beds, play area and public art. The garden showcases the work of local craftspeople. Look out for the Three Guardians sculpture of Portland stone (1), the beautiful oak pergola (2) and leaf shaped picnic table (3) and the innovative solar powered watering system (8). A list of makers can be found on the wall by the main gate.



Role of the LGA

The garden is owned by SHDC but planning and maintenance are shared with the LGA. The LGA raise money for new facilities and have co-ordinated thousands of hours of volunteer labour towards the upkeep of the garden. For example volunteers design and care for the planting and flowerbeds, the sandpit was recently rebuilt by local parents and nearby residents lock the garden overnight to ensure its safety.

A Garden for the Community

The garden is a haven for people and wildlife alike. Its sunny flowerbeds, running water and interesting trees provide a perfect backdrop for summer events, drama, music, installations and special performances.

Year-round blossom attracts many species of bee while butterflies, dragonflies, newts, frogs and toads are regular visitors.

The garden is a wonderful place for play and children from the nearby Grove School enjoy Forrest School lessons here most days in term.