

Bridewell Organic Gardens

Newsletter

Therapeutic Gardens in West Oxfordshire

Winter 2009

Welcome to the Bridewell Organic Gardens Newsletter.

We are re-establishing the regular newsletter for circulation to gardeners, staff, volunteers, family, friends, members and supporters. During the year we hope to publish two or three issues and would welcome any contributions or ideas for further issues.

Included in this issue:-

- Garden developments
- Feedback from gardeners
- The Vineyard
- Trips out
- Open days
- New Trustees

Garden Developments

The most obvious new development to anyone visiting Bridewell is the smart new tearoom, complete with a new wood burning stove to make it cosy. Don't be fooled by the electric sockets though, there is no electricity supply at Bridewell. Work is in progress or is planned to update the area around the tearoom including a disabled access ramp; a covered walkway to the kitchen and refurbishment of the kitchen and old tearoom. All of this will improve the facilities for everyone especially in the winter. Lets hope its not too comfortable or no one will want to do any gardening.

Also planned is a larger greenhouse to replace several small ones. This will enable gardeners to work together more.



Following guidance from the Conservation Officer at WODC, maintenance work on the garden wall is ongoing using traditional lime mortar. Volunteers from Reed Elsevier in Kidlington have helped with this.

Bridewell's new website

We are really delighted to be able to announce that we have a new website that was launched in October.

The website has been designed and published for us by CD Alive, part of CD Associates, a specialist marketing and promotions company. We made contact with them after a recommendation from another Witney based charity, The Clive Project.

The quality of the work is fantastic and the speed with which they did it was amazing. One relatively short meeting and a few emails were all that were required for them to come up with this fresh and contemporary looking site. A welcome replacement for the old website that we had. CD Alive will be maintaining the site for us, so we will be able to make sure that we keep it up to date with major events at Bridewell.



Feedback from Gardeners

We currently have around forty clients attending regularly and the extra day on Thursdays has meant that we have been able to offer more places over the last year. Work that has taken place this year is to get feedback from the gardeners about how they feel the opportunity of attending Bridewell has helped them and what they most want to get out of their time here. The Primary Care Trust has conducted a user led monitoring scheme. A score of 1 means 'bulls eye' or perfect, 7 'way off mark' or terrible.

In 2008 the scores across the 7 categories ranged from an average of 2.6 for access and 1.4 for general environment and atmosphere. So not quite a 'bulls eye' but much nearer to the centre than the edge of the 'dartboard'. Individual comments included, 'Minibus is very helpful', 'Sense of family – real acceptance', 'Brilliant, relaxed atmosphere', 'Strong on hopes and dreams but not on goal setting', 'Openly encourage gardeners to use skills'.

Bridewell staff recognise the need for ongoing feedback and review. Ralph Raistrick, garden manager, continues to work with Restore and Root and Branch on measuring client outcome including goal setting and regular review.

New Trustees

Two new Trustees were appointed in 2008, Martin Bate and Caroline Walker. Martin is an accountant and has taken over the role of treasurer and Caroline has worked locally for the NHS for many years as a nurse and health visitor in a range of settings. Chris Ward and Bill Potter have both resigned as Trustees.



Martin Bate writes:-

My wife was working as a volunteer at Bridewell when I was asked if I would consider taking on the role of treasurer in September 2007. My only experience of voluntary work was at the local primary school several years ago. I thought preparing accounts would be easy compared to working with children! After attending a trustees meeting to see what the charity was like I came away convinced that Bridewell was a good organisation to be involved with. I have now been a trustee since June 2008 and have one set of accounts under my belt! I look forward to my future involvement with Bridewell.



Marie-Anick's Apple cake recipe

8 oz. self raising flour
4 oz. sugar
1 lb. cooking apples
2 eggs
4 oz. margarine or butter
Milk
1 tsp salt (optional)
1 oz. soft brown sugar (optional)

Sieve flour & salt
Rub in margarine or butter
Mix in sugar and eggs
Add milk
Cut apples in small slices and add to mixture
Mix well
Put mixture into a 8" to 9" greased tin
Sprinkle sugar on top (brown)
Bake at 200 °C for 30 – 40 minutes (fan oven), none fan oven may take up to 1 hour
And then enjoy.

Caroline Walker writes:-

Little did I expect that following a visit to Bridewell on a sunny July day in 2007 that I would end up a Trustee of the charity. I had been aware of Bridewell for some time and was so impressed with the setting and the work going on. Janet Maxwell, chair of the Trustees was gently persuasive in getting me on board. Janet and I had worked together in the area and she seemed sure that after 20 years of Health Visiting I would be an appropriate person to join the team. So far I have developed my tea making skills on open days, helped pick grapes and enjoyed weekend duties in a range of weather conditions, unfortunately more wet and cold than sunny to date. I'm getting better at not letting the chickens escape. On a more serious note I hope I will be able to adequately fulfil the Trustee role 'to ensure that Bridewell is run according to it's aims and to help guide the organisation on issues of policy'. When I read through all the paperwork I feel somewhat daunted by the responsibility; fortunately there is an experienced and committed team of staff, volunteers and trustees at Bridewell to lead the way and guide me.



The Vineyard

The Mediterranean look of the vineyard has been enhanced by lavender and rosemary adding to the artichokes and olive trees previously planted. As we all know summer 2008 wasn't exactly Mediterranean with a resultant drop in the grape harvest. The Orion vines at the bottom of the vineyard came into flower when the weather was too wet, so only part of the fruit set properly. The 2008 yield was 802Kg – which should make 740 bottles of wine, compared to 1700Kg (1400 bottles) in 2007. On a more positive note for the first time Bridewell had an entry in the UK Vineyards Guide, resulting in an approach from Waitrose to discuss stocking our wine. As the current stock is selling well at our current outlets (Finstock shop, The Plough at Finstock, Chipping Norton Organics) and with 2 new outlets this year (Barford St. Martin village shop and Garden Organics at Ryton), not to mention our own open days and stalls at local events, Waitrose has missed the boat.

The 2007 still wine has passed the Regional Wine Scheme, so will be labelled Oxfordshire Regional Wine and available in 2009. The 2007 grapes were divided into 2 batches for still and sparkling wine; we have until 2010 to wait to sample the sparkling wine.



Trips Out

In 2008 three outings have been enjoyed by gardeners, staff and volunteers. The gardeners make suggestions of where they would like to go and then vote. Hidecote Gardens near Chipping Campden, the Botanic Gardens at Kew and bowling in Swindon were chosen. A number of smaller excursions were also made locally

In the winter garden by Clare

I rub my face in the rubbery leaves
Soft moss of icy raindrops
My hairs stand on end
My spine shivers.

Clearing plant beds
Overrun with weeds
A mass of tingles and spikes
Some soft sticky things
Ground cover perhaps
Rips and spits out
I love how it feels
A rogue nettle takes a bite
While I upturn a bunch and wear it
on my head like a rasta wig
I laugh
And want to shout to the others
I laugh and smile
I feel large and abundant
Breezy inside.

I notice how much mud I have on me
But I like it.

I wonder if I was to lie down in the flower bed
The one covered in dark galaxy
Dark and mint moss
If it would feel as soft and springy as it looks.

In my dreams it is dark
Like a midnight forest
Soft spring and scented heavily.

Someone asks if I have been rolling in the mud
We all laugh
I feel happy.

As I get back on the bus
I try not to think of the other buses
The hospital buses
But as the door slams I am back
I think about banging on the windows
To get me out
I could curl up in a furrow on the roadside
Make a nest in a hedgerow
But I force myself to sit tight and breathe deep
I remember this is the Bridewell bus
I am part of the garden
I want to grow too
And I think I can find friends.



Open Days

Open days continue to be successful with the 3 a year format of May, July and September, so that visitors can enjoy Bridewell in different seasons. Sadly September 2008 had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the wet weather; it actually turned out to be quite a nice day but the thought of all the cars stuck in a muddy field made it too risky. What happened to all the cakes? May and July were well attended raising just over £3000 plus vine sales of £1330 making all the hard work worthwhile but equally rewarding was seeing so many people enjoying visiting Bridewell and learning about it on the guided tours conducted by Alex and Ian.

2009 Open Days

Sunday 7 June

Sunday 16 August

from 14.00 to 17.00

So why not come along and bring your friends



Message from the Chair

2008 has been another successful year for the organisation as can be seen by the activities outlined in this newsletter. We are continually striving to make improvements for all the people who attend. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff, volunteers and gardeners who have put in so much work over the last 12 months so that despite the rather wet and unseasonal weather we have had at times the garden continues to blossom and remain a hive of activity. We look forward to another busy and productive year. We would welcome any suggestions for articles for future issues of the newsletter which we hope will inform our many member, friends and supporters of Bridewell of the range of work we do. Thanks to Caroline Walker and Verity Hughes for helping to produce this edition.

Janet Maxwell



Trustees

Janet Maxwell (Chair)
Caroline Walker
Mary Elford
Martin Bate
Verity Hughes

Addresses

Bridewell Office
33A High Street
Witney OX28 6HP
Tel. 01993 864530

Bridewell Organic Gardens
The Walled Garden
Wilcote
Oxon.
OX7 3EB
Tel. 01993 868313

Manager - Alex Taylor
Garden Manager - Ralph Raistrick

www.bridewellorganicgardens.co.uk
info@bridewellorganicgardens.co.uk

Registered charity No 1069878
Patrons: The Hon. Mr. & Mrs. C E Cecil