



Welcome to the Autumn News Letter

It will come as no surprise that this year none of the usual spring and summer events which were due to take place in Jubilee Gardens actually took place. The Eel Festival, Aquafest and Ely Pride were all cancelled and so too were the very popular weekly summer band concerts. Despite all this the gardens continue to be well used by the people of Ely as a place to sit and enjoy, have a picnic or simply walk through. Covid-19 has not diminished the need for open spaces and has probably highlighted their value.

A Jubilee Gardens First?



Wednesday (7th October) saw the first use of Jubilee Gardens as a helipad (as far as I am aware). The East Anglia Air Ambulance landed amid great clatter much to the surprise of visitors to the gardens and local residents alike. Paramedics had been called to a person taken seriously ill down by the river. The helicopter crew meanwhile chatted to passers-by and residents from nearby.

The helicopter departed after over an hour on the ground. We later learned that sadly, the outcome of the emergency was not good.

Gardening and Working Parties

Alas there has only been one working party in 2020 which was just before the Covid-19 lockdown. During the lockdown the Friends of Jubilee Gardens' event insurance policy lapsed

and it was decided that due to ongoing uncertainty we would not renew it immediately. We hope to reinstate this to allow a full programme of working parties in 2021.

With the easing of restrictions some members have nevertheless done some “freelance” work in the gardens. Judith Lockyer and Sheila Mitchell have been particularly busy in various areas including the Dry Garden and Blue and White Garden and have made a great difference there.

Damage

Thankfully the vandalism in the garden reported in the last News Letter has not been ongoing. However the gardens were a popular venue for large groups of drinkers throughout the fine summer weather resulting in antisocial behaviour, large amounts of litter and noise. At one point the council cordoned off the area by Missin Gate and Winfarthing court to prevent the wholesale use of the gardens as a toilet. With the coming of autumn this is now rather less of an issue and hopefully the fence can soon be removed to allow full access.

Some members expressed fears that the opening of the Inferno American BBQ restaurant in Broad Street would result in noisy gatherings in Jubilee Gardens together with an increase in litter and damage. Several members made representation to the council licencing committee. Some, including the Chairman of the Friends of Jubilee Gardens who is a local resident participated in the on-line licencing committee meeting. Only minor changes were made to the licencing application. The restaurant is now open subject to current Covid-19 restrictions so we won't know of any detriment for a while. It may turn out that fears are groundless and of course some will welcome a new restaurant and takeaway opening in Ely.

During the Lockdown



During the lockdown people were unable to linger in the gardens but there were still quite a number passing through in pursuit of their daily exercise ration. At times however the gardens were deserted as these photographs show.



Following easing of restrictions people tended to gather there as hospitality venues remained closed for some time. When these started to reopen there were still large numbers of people in the gardens presumably as they felt relatively safe in the open. The presence of large numbers of drinkers did result in a great deal of noise and often aggressive behaviour which will have deterred some visitors to the gardens.

Committee

The Committee of the Friends of Jubilee Gardens has not met due to restrictions on gatherings. There hasn't been a great deal to discuss with all the events cancelled and no summer outing or prospect of a Christmas get together. At the time of writing we are in the process of setting up a "virtual" committee meeting to discuss the way forward.

As mentioned in the last News Letter some committee members will be stepping down in the coming spring. These include the chairperson and treasurer. As yet there is no one ready to take up these posts (which are not terribly onerous) so if any members would like to volunteer themselves please get in touch. This does affect the future of the Friends which may not be able to continue without active support.

Best wishes to all!

John Crawford
Chairperson FOJG

Finally, Some More Pics from Past and Present



Frosty February 2020 in the Gardens



December 2019



Beast from the East 2018



11th February 2002

