

Report on St Oswald's Garden for Foundry House AGM on

Thursday 17th October 2024

Introduction and background

For the benefit of new Trustees of Foundry House, the garden is at the rear of St Oswalds House, an ateb housing association complex in Main Street Pembroke. The gardening group is grateful to ateb for the garden to continue to operate whilst the future working arrangements are yet to be agreed and formalised.

The management group consists of John Hogg, Chair, Gaynor Thomas Secretary with the rest of the group comprising of Leslie Ponsford, Andrew Bignell, Susie Chaple and Peter Thomas with Ann Mortensen being the Foundry House representative.

Regular and minuted management group meetings have taken place over the year.

Current Position

The garden has looked excellent during the growing season with a range of flowers, vegetables and fruit trees. In spite of the extremely wet Summer, we have had 90+ visitors to the garden over the past 12 months and that number would have probably been higher if we had remembered to ask everyone to sign our visitor's book. Those that did sign it left lovely, positive comments. The garden is more than a growing space and people put value on the opportunity to just sit in a tranquil and friendly environment and giving nature a helping hand.

We have had a couple of mums come in with their children and they (that's the children not the mums) really enjoy digging the beds and maybe harvesting or planting.

The garden continues to be used by Mena, Founder of the Eastgate Creative Hwb, as a location for gathering materials for nature inspired pottery as part of a project.

We approached The Tanyard to see if they would be interested in renovating the gnomes in the garden. The wonderful results of which are documented on the blog. Following this we had a gnome hunt in the garden the day of the plant sale. Lucky participants had a plant and some sweets to take home.

We have a potential project with the Scouts and have forwarded a suggestion to them for the discussion. Gaynor has spoken to them recently and they felt that the project we suggested was a bit ambitious for them. However they are still very interested in working in the garden in the Spring. Because of the range of their ages we have agreed that we will discuss, amongst ourselves, our plans for the area in question. We have then agreed to meet up in the garden and they can decide where and when they can be involved.

We can't believe we are looking at Winter jobs as we have not really had a lot of time in the garden due to the wet weather, incredibly wet. We will probably have to close for a couple of weeks, at least, as some of the retaining boards are rotten and need replacing. We have replaced the compost bins with the pallets, that we were given. Photographs in the Blog. We were also fortunate that our friend, Ray Smith, was kind enough to use his trailer to

collect a load of compost for us. We are also very grateful to Paul, who collects mulch for us to lay down on the paths. Thanks to them both.

We decided to hold a plant sale in May, which was very successful and raised over £200 with what was taken on the day and with subsequent donations over the following couple of weeks. Overall, we have a modest cash balance. Copies of the accounts are available.

We have tried several slug deterrents and in spite of them not being particularly successful we ended up having quite a good crop of runner and broad beans. We also had good crops of tomatoes, potatoes, onions, apples, spinach, leeks and garlic. There have also been plenty of raspberries. If you happen to call in when we are harvesting you may go home with a goodie bag of fruit and vegetables.

Because of the wet Summer we continued to put food out for the birds and have been rewarded by seeing a Robin among others visiting the garden.

We rely heavily on rainwater for our plants. Andrew has done an excellent job on installing several water butts around the garden. We are always in the market for more. I think it is the first year since I have been volunteering in St Oswald's that we have not been struggling for water.

Leslie has taken our composting in hand and we are much more conscientious about what we put in the compost bins. The end product is looking really good as well as giving a home to several slow worms.

We are trying to grow plants throughout the year for the birds and insects and also to provide continuous colour.

We have been given the opportunity to have a section on the Foundry House web site. Gaynor updates the blog when relevant. It will give you some insight into the flowers and insects we have there and the ongoing news about the garden. You can access this from a link on the Foundry House home page. Please have a look.

For those of you who don't know, we try to open the garden on a Thursday. This cannot always be possible as we are a very small core of volunteers and some of us have family that live away. Nevertheless, the success of what can be achieved is clearly visible.

Looking Forward.

Getting more people to visit the garden is an ambition, despite the access being challenging and the garden itself having a gradient.

However if the door is open please come in and have a look around, you will be warmly welcomed and may even leave with some produce!

There is an opportunity to sell produce through a donation/honesty box at Foundry House and we would welcome any thoughts and views on this.