

Friends of Caversham Court Gardens

Newsletter no.5 - October 2009

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PLANTS IN CAVERSHAM COURT

Join one of the horticultural tours for Friends to be conducted by Emily Waters, the Caversham Court Head Gardener, on Thursday, October 8 and Saturday, October 10. There are 2 tours each day: 1 – 2pm and 3 - 4pm . Booking essential by calling the tour coordinator on 0118 947 4296.

Before or after your tour stop for tea and cake at the Refreshment kiosk! It is open 1.30 – c.4.00

RBC EVENTS IN CAVERSHAM COURT

Look out for information about events that RBC is planning to run with the purpose of publicising Caversham Court to as wide an audience as possible.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP FCCG?

- Help out at events, support or join the committee
- Train as volunteer guide – new team being set up and training provided
- Assist the charities at the refreshment kiosk
- Most important of all: come and visit Caversham Court often and tell your friends and relations so that the park is popular and well used. This also discourages less-appreciative visitors. Enjoy the teas and tempting cakes in the Refreshment kiosk which should be open in the afternoons on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until the end of October

Contact: FriendsofCavershamCourt@googlemail.com or Tel: 0118 947 5062

REFRESHMENT KIOSK

The opening of a refreshment kiosk in Caversham Court run by 4 local charities has been a great success and very popular with visitors to the gardens.

League of Friends of RBH, Ways and Means Trust (which works with people with physical or mental problems), the Duchess of Kent House Charity and branches of the Women's Institute each run the kiosk on different weeks for the benefit of their own funds. Teas and cakes are served from 1.30 to about 4.00 and sometimes longer if the sun shines and trade is brisk. The kiosk will close for the winter at the beginning of November.

Frances Hill of the Ways and Means Trust, who chairs the kiosk committee, and her colleagues have brought enormous enthusiasm to all the many challenges of setting up and running the scheme. Working with Reading Borough Council the committee has had to work out how to run the kiosk and what equipment was needed. It was open just in time for them to do a marvellous job of serving cream teas and subsequently Pimms to all the thousands of visits who came on opening day.

So you can sample wonderful cakes and benefit local charities at the same time! Look for the sign board in the gateway from now to the end of October

CAVERSHAM COURT NEWS AND UPDATE

The opening was inevitably a work in progress! Still to come are

- signs at the gate making it clear that it is a public park open to all. The lack of a sign outside the gate has made Caversham Court one of Caversham's best kept secrets. FCCG are doing their bit to ensure that as many people hear about it and already we have a significant number of members who come from outside RG4.
- permanent interpretation boards will soon replace the temporary ones in the gazebo, the vaults and at the top of the bank next to the gate into St Peter's;
- the memorial board for the Gazebo listing the people in whose memory trees have been planted, benches and other gifts made to Caversham Court;
- bicycle racks for inside Caversham Court gates to encourage cyclists to leave their bikes there and enjoy the gardens on foot;
- trellising in the vinery which will give an impression of the extent of the glassup house may take a little longer to come.

- ornamental fencing at the river edge will replace the temporary orange netting to keep the swans and geese in the Thames as much as possible. Building up the bank all the way along would be a huge and expensive job

In reply to some of the suggestions we have received (and passed on to the Parks Department):

- Parking will remain an insoluble problem – there is literally nowhere for all the people who want to come by car to park their cars. There is limited angle parking down The Warren to be shared with other visitors, commuters, canoeists, those attending church etc.
- the 4 disabled parking spaces between the gardens and the Rectory are on land belonging to the diocese and are shared between the church and Caversham Court visitors
- the orange gravel should improve after it has been topped and it will over time consolidate to give a harder surface
- your requests for more seats, particularly down beside the river and along the long walk have been passed on. The aim was to give Caversham Court the feel of a private garden – which is what it was until 1934 – and for this reason there are fewer of benches. There is in fact lots of informal seating in the vinery, the house footprint and the causeway.

WONDERFUL OPENING, 7 AUGUST

At 3 o'clock Fred Pugh, the Mayor of Reading, ceremoniously opened the new gates and led all the people who had been patiently waiting for their first sight of the refurbished gardens. Children first! People came from all over Reading, and beyond, to discover the reopened gazebo, the vinery, the footprints of the houses and the other new features.

Miraculously the sun shone, and about four and a half thousand people came to enjoy the gardens and all the fun including the jazz band, the Scottish dancing, a Punch and Judy and croquet. Many visitors took advantage of the ferry service across the Thames, having parked their cars on Thameside Promenade. This was a very popular 'Park & Sail' innovation which we hope can be repeated on other special occasions.

We were delighted to meet so many existing Friends at the FCCG welcome tent and to have so many more of you join to support us in our work to preserve and publicise Caversham's best-loved gardens.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS IN CAVERSHAM COURT, September 2009

The Heritage Open Days were another opportunity for putting Caversham Court on the map – and not just the local map. It was advertised to the whole area in the Explore Reading leaflet published by RBC and, nationally, on the Heritage Open Doors website. There were certainly many visitors from distant parts of Reading and beyond.

FCCG volunteers staffed a welcome and information point to hand out leaflets about Caversham Court and talk to people about the gardens. We are very grateful to Gillian Clark and Anne Latto for providing guided tours. We hope that by the 2010 Open Days we have a much bigger team of guides.

The Refreshment kiosk did a brisk trade in tea and cake and for most of the weekend the sun shone and the gardens were full of people

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN . . .

Gardening courses at Chiltern Edge, Sonning Common - 0118 972 3362

RHS Certificate in Horticulture – Part 1 and Part 2 both starting in September

Allotment Gardening – starting in February 2010

History of Reading Society – meets monthly at 7.30 in Abbey Baptist Church

21 October - Anne McCormack on the Irish in 19th Century Reading

18 November – Dr Margaret Simons on Three Men in a Post: Reading Medical Officers of Health 1872-1939

16 December – Joan Dils will give her Presidential Address on Reading in time of Henry VIII.

FCCG MEMBERSHIP – ENCOURAGE YOUR FRIENDS TO SUPPORT US!

Subscription to end 2010 is £2.00 – to join FCCG contact:

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