

First, please accept apologies from Roger & Sue Thompson who cannot be present to report personally tonight.

PARISH FORUM REPORT - ELFORD HALL GARDEN PROJECT

I can report on another good year for the project. Both membership and volunteer numbers remain steady and donations from visitors and friends have been pleasing in terms of cash donations and in the donation of 'goods' for use on the project. During 2017, we received another top award from the Royal Horticultural Society 'It's Your Neighbourhood' campaign. Visitor numbers remain good and we are able to welcome visitors in all months of the year, though numbers reflect weather conditions to an extent. The allotments are fully tenanted at present. We are also getting an increasing number of wildlife enthusiasts using the hide and the wildlife cameras and photographing around the site generally.

In the past 12 months, we have added a small wildlife pool to the garden, a large greenhouse, a new container to house event equipment and we completed the weatherproofing of the bothy buildings. April saw the unveiling of an ornate sundial to commemorate Jim Riley, one of the original volunteers. Following the successful beer festival, we were able to invest in a new marquee, a catering BBQ and heat lamps to keep festival food warm. The 'free' library in the house is being well used and the produce table is well supported by locals and visiting groups. This summer, we have arranged for 'Tarte au Citroen' to serve coffee, tea and cakes on several Sundays. This seems to be well supported at present.

We are grateful to the Parish Council for agreeing to move one of the village 'dog poo' bins to a new location at the main entrance to the garden. This has improved (but not entirely solved) the dog mess problem.

In the past year we have been pleased to welcome 3 new trustees to the management team - Ben Crutchley and Colin & Ursula Middlemore. This 'younger' new blood will help to secure the future of the walled garden project as older trustees retire and hopefully it will encourage more youthful villagers to get involved. In the future, we hope to be able to persuade more villagers (especially families) to become volunteers, particularly at weekends when volunteer numbers are low.

The Family Music & Real Ale Festival of 2018 takes place on July 7th and will hopefully attract villagers and visitors from further afield. This is the only fund-raising event now that the bonfire event has been set aside due to Health & Safety concerns so its success is crucial to the future of the project. Once again, we depend heavily on the villagers who volunteer to help out on the day and beforehand and swell our regular volunteer force. Without their help there would be no beerfest so we thank them sincerely.

Roger Thompson

PARISH FORUM REPORT - ELFORD ART GROUP

After many happy years with Sue R. at the helm, she has handed over the administration of the group to Sue Thompson (thompson680@btinternet.com). Over the years, Sue R. has built up a thriving group of local artists with many and varied talents.

Under her leadership, the Elford Art Group has had another productive year with many new original paintings on display in the upstairs art room, several of which are for sale at affordable prices (contact Sue Thompson on 01827383592 for a private viewing or simply visit the group on a Friday morning). For 2018, the group produced a 2018 calendar of their art work and there are plans to produce another calendar for 2019 which will be on sale this August.

The art group is a mixed ability, self-help group with no tutoring and members help each other out with advice when needed. Being a sociable, friendly group, this presents no difficulties! The group organises visits to galleries and exhibitions from time to time in addition to making art together. The 2018 London trip had to be cancelled due to snow but the group plan to visit events in the Cotswolds and at Weston Park this year.

The group currently has 18 members and is now at capacity for the room, with a waiting list for potential members.

If anyone has photos of the Art Group Scarecrow Festival installations over the years, we would be delighted to receive photofiles of these to complete our archive. Please send them to the above email address.

Sue Thompson

PARISH FORUM REPORT - Elford Sewing Group

This group is in its second year and is always happy to accept new members. Their first collaborative effort is a wall hanging depicting scenes from the village and can be seen on display in the front room of the Gardener's House at the walled garden. Currently nearing completion is their second wall hanging and the theme for this is an Elford Hall Gardens Alphabet, depicting the A-Z of things seen at the walled garden. The plan is to display this in the same room as the original piece in the Gardener's House. Hopefully, it will be on display by the start of July.

Sue Thompson