



FRIENDS OF WOODBURY PARK CEMETERY



GARDENERS REPORT 2018



Good for butterflies, birds and gunpowder but definitely not for dogs or people

In 2018 the volunteers put in 434 hours of work, mostly spent in the everyday tasks needed to maintain this beautiful place. These include strimming, raking - both grass and leaves - mulching, pruning, weeding, clearing fallen wood and, sadly, clearing litter.

However, in January we prepared the ground for planting whips of alder buckthorn along the boundary wall in Chapel Meadow.

As we mentioned in our previous report, alder buckthorn is not a common hedging plant, but we have chosen it as it is the host plant for the yellow brimstone butterflies' eggs and larvae. We have on occasion seen a yellow brimstone butterfly in WPC, but soon we hope they will be more frequently spotted. The hedge, kindly supplied by TWBC was planted in March and has grown well during the year.

In February we had a lovely display of winter aconites and snowdrops and as they began to die off we planted a further 80 of each in-the-green to bulk up the existing clumps. We find that planting these varieties whilst still in leaf (in-the-green) ensures complete success.

Our next important task was to construct twiggy barriers around all the grassy areas in which the wild daffodils and fritillaries will flower. These barriers cannot be completely effective but we hope they will make people think, and deter them from walking in these areas, also keeping their dogs from chasing through.

In March a beautiful moth was found on the leaf litter under the birch trees. It was identified by Dr. Ian Beavis as an Oak Beauty. In the next few months we saw a burgeoning of wild flowers:- cowslips, wild daffodils, wood anemones, violets, honesty, lady's smock and many more. In fact the total number of different species of flowers recorded for 2018 was 65.



Perfect camouflage when on a lichen-encrusted bough

In June we realized our ambition to have a stall on Tunbridge Wells Farmers' Market. This was an instant success. We handed out our recently published 3-fold leaflet and the latest Newsletter, and we chatted! It was surprising how many local people had never visited WPC. However, in the following months we have seen a remarkable increase in the numbers of visitors, so we felt very happy about this venture, that is, until this December when the Council decided to discontinue this popular market.



Brinkmanship

Two Friends had an unusual experience while walking one summer afternoon in WPC, when, out of the long grass emerged an extremely small squirrel, followed by another, and then another. They played together, rolling and tumbling around as young animals do, when suddenly they discovered the feet of the visitors; they were fascinated, and seemed fearless, scrambling over their shoes, and even climbing up a trouser leg. Eventually, the two Friends decided to move on, but to their amazement the squirrels would not let

them leave, following their feet wherever they went, until our Friends decided to make a dash for it, outrunning the poor little squirrels who appeared not to have a protecting parent.

In September the Ivy mining bee returned in huge numbers. Dr. Ian Beavis explained that the adult bee feeds on the flowers of ivy. It burrows vertically into the soil for about 12 inches, where it lays a solitary egg. He said these vertical burrows also have lateral ones. In making these burrows the bees have scarified the grassy bank far better than we could ever have done, and much more widely than last year. As a result, we look forward in the Spring to a better germination of wild flower seeds than ever before.



Depends on ivy nectar to survive

It was a very hot summer, particularly on Saturday afternoons, or so it seemed, so we were delighted when on one occasion a very kind neighbour appeared over the boundary wall with mugs of tea. We were so very grateful.

In the Autumn we planted 200 crocus bulbs, 200 fritillary bulbs, and 200 wild daffodil bulbs, all thanks to TWBC's generosity. It is inevitable that the squirrels can sniff some of them out, even though we tried to dissuade them by putting a pinch of chilli powder onto each bulb.

In October we attempted to clear the area near the lower unofficial exit, which was covered in bindweed. I say “attempted” as bindweed is extraordinarily invasive; one root was carefully removed in its entirety, with all its lateral branches attached. It measured 18 feet in length.

On 25th October for the second year running we made our trip to Canterbury to receive a Gold Award from Kent Wildlife - “Wild about Gardens” section. This followed hot on the heels of our 2018 Silver Gilt award from South and South East in Bloom for creating lasting improvements to our local environment for the benefit of those who live work and visit.

In November a large branch of our majestic cedar tree came down. It had to be dealt with by the Council’s contractors, who kindly enabled us to make a new log pile, by sawing it up into convenient lengths. They also reassured us that there was no fear of the tree becoming unbalanced and unsafe as its roots will make compensatory growth.

In December our winter-flowering cherry began to flower as usual, but, there being no frosts, has been able to flower in its full glory as never before, and well into January.

Angela Swain

Gardening Team Co-Ordinator January, 2019.

