



# FRIENDS OF TOWNHILL PARK HOUSE AND GARDENS

Dear Friends,

Thank you again for your excellent support. All four of our Open Days were well attended, which makes the considerable efforts of the volunteers all the more worthwhile. You'll sense that this newsletter under new Chairmanship is my first and therefore somewhat reliant on others input.

Having worked at the school in various roles over the last 9 years, I have had the opportunity to enjoy the gardens on many occasions. In my new role as Bursar and Chairperson, I now get a better understanding of the work required to maintain our stunning grounds and how vital our volunteers are in supporting this.

A farewell to Crispin Ingham in May 2023 after 7 years as Chairman of the committee. As thanks for his services and support to the Friends, an Apple tree (named Crispin, and is reputed to be very crisp) and plaque were planted and presented to him in the Orchard.

It's always such a joy seeing members and visitors enjoy the entertainment put on at our Open Days.

The displays of vintage cars give the house the right historical flavour and we look forward to seeing more cars at our Open Days. The formal gardens were, as always, beautifully presented and maintained during 2023/4 and my grateful thanks go to our wonderful gardening volunteers, their expertise is so very much appreciated.

The splendid efforts of the Grounds team (Luke, & Liam), ensure the hedges, grass and general grounds look in excellent shape, so as to fully complement the formal areas. Their efforts are very ably supported by the volunteer 'Posse' mustered by the School Gardeners Ted Waite and Rod Clay. The Posse has become a very valued group who help in the grounds on a number on Sunday mornings during the year and at our Open Days. A big thank you goes to everyone involved.

The Posse number would welcome additional support, should anyone have any interest! Tea and cake are provided as a token of appreciation for assistance. Please contact Ted Waite. [Ted@thegreggschools.org](mailto:Ted@thegreggschools.org)

As always there are so many to thank for their active support during the year, in particular all members of the committee and posse. Peter Wilkinson has stepped down, after 24 impressive year's loyal service as Treasurer. Luke Enticknap has kindly taken on this important role, and we appreciate his willingness to step up.



Nicky Pickett, the school's catering manager, garners a super special thank you. Along with her team of willing helpers they serve exceptional cake and tea and make such an important and valuable contribution to the coffers of the Gardens charity for which we are all indebted.

We again held two Members' Days during 2023/24. A day in August for picnics and a BBQ; and an autumn day in October although sadly on none of the occasions did the weather properly come to the party! Another two Members' Days will be held this year with further details at the bottom of this newsletter.

I do hope that all members will renew their membership for 2025, as this will help with the continued development of the wonderful Gertrude Jekyll gardens and other emerging areas.

Hayley Cooke (Chairperson)



### WEBSITE

The Gardens are included as a part of the school website [www.thegreggschool.org](http://www.thegreggschool.org)  
Please visit the site to learn more.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

The friends are always in need of any help that can be given. This is not always a case of being on the physical side! Perhaps you would be in a position to help, for example by:

- picking apples to be sold on Heritage Open Day
- Fund raising ideas or become a member of the committee
- Arboretum and grounds clearance (cutting down brambles and holly etc)
- Renew your membership for 2025 and bring a friend on Open Days

Gardens and Grounds Clearance Days 2025 – Please see more details in the 'Volunteer Working Posse' report below.

If you would like to become more involved you would be very welcome, please contact any member of the committee. Key personnel are listed below:

Hayley Cooke Chairperson and Secretary (School Bursar) 02380 472133	<a href="mailto:hcc@thegreggschools.org">hcc@thegreggschools.org</a>
Luke Enticknap Treasurer & Groundsman 02380 472133	<a href="mailto:lcs@thegreggschools.org">lcs@thegreggschools.org</a>
Rod Clay Gardener & Co-ordinator of the North Terrace Borders	<a href="mailto:rowann8@yahoo.co.uk">rowann8@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Ted Waite Gardener & Posse co-ordinator	<a href="mailto:Ted@thegreggschools.org">Ted@thegreggschools.org</a>



### SUNK GARDENS

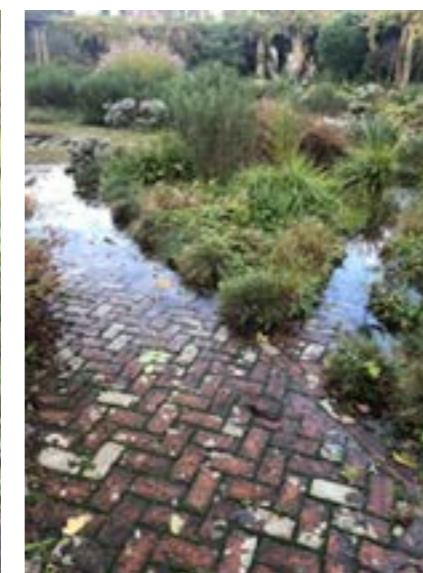
The July Open Day provides the perfect opportunity to appreciate the Sunk Garden, with the yuccas in full splendour and the weeds less conspicuous. In 2024, the evolving extreme weather had a significant impact, surpassing even that of the deer.

Several plants succumbed to the prolonged cold spells of winter, the subsequent wet spring and summer, combined with the hot summer of the year before. Notably affected were the tall cordylines in the corner, the white broom, most of the lavenders, numerous rosemaries, several artemesias, and the Clematis Montana. These plants were replaced with Nepeta, Verbena, Achilleas, Festuccas, and more rosemaries. Additionally, an Ampelopsis, Actinidia, Trachelospermum, and Solanum were introduced to the climbers.



We extend our gratitude to Kate Martin, a Friend member, who generously donated box blight caterpillar spray to help address the persistent caterpillar issue on the box balls.

There was also a substantial repair and overhaul of the pond, which had developed a leak. The Grounds team drained the pond and discovered several newts residing there. They subsequently repaired and resealed the pond, reinstating the newts. The pond now looks splendid and enhances the ambience of the Sunk Garden. A heartfelt thank you to the Grounds team for their efforts.



The Sunk Garden lived up to its name due to the excessive rainfall, resulting in many of the beds and paths becoming waterlogged. We have mulched these beds as much as possible this autumn to mitigate the issue. The Grounds team also plans to improve the drainage within the Sunk Garden paths in the near future.

The gazebo roof has undergone repairs and is expected to last for many more years. The Posse assisted in clearing and weeding the pervasive horsetail and other weeds, for which we are thankful. Special thanks go to Rod Clay for his invaluable advice, assistance, and companionship. A management plan to reduce the horsetail in the Sunk Garden is underway, involving amendments to the soil pH.



### THE HERBACEOUS BORDERS

Weeds and grasses have been a pervasive issue across all areas of the Borders this year. They have particularly flourished in the herbaceous borders, with mousetail being especially prominent. Nevertheless, the plants intended to thrive in these borders have also done remarkably well.



The deer have continued their persistent interest in the peonies, resulting in them being eaten. Additionally, some young deer were observed testing the potentilla flowers, thus the ongoing battle of wits endures.



On a more positive note, the Cottinus has finally exhibited some growth this year, as have the purple elderflower shrubs, contributing to the overall fullness of the garden.

Regrettably, there have been some losses, including one of the potentillas. However, the wet weather has favoured the Monardas and Sanguisorbas, which have put on a splendid display. Despite the challenges posed by the weather and wildlife, the gardens Borders continue to prosper.



### THE HERB GARDEN

The restoration of the Herb Garden continues to make progress. Notably, the long path has been restored by the Grounds team, deserving our heartfelt gratitude once again. The persistent issue with replacing the Box, which was removed due to blight and caterpillars, has been resolved with the acquisition and planting of *Lonicera nitida* 'Baggesens Gold'.



Furthermore, a significant revamp of the Herb Garden has been undertaken. This involved diligently weeding the bare ground left by the removed Box and Cistus, and planting a diverse array of shrubs including Hy-pericums, Hydrangeas, Ceratostigma, Ligustrum, and more Vincas, along with some Miscanthus grasses and Ferns. Additionally, perennials such as Hellebores, Peonies, and Pulmonaria have been introduced.

These endeavours will mark a considerable transformation, ensuring the Herb Garden remains a flourishing and attractive space. The dedication and hard work of all involved are appreciated.



### THE BOUDOIR GARDEN

The planting in the borders, established several years ago, has now reached a stage of maturity, effectively covering the soil and suppressing the growth of weeds. These areas comprise deer-resistant small shrubs, making them low-maintenance and requiring only occasional pruning. This year, the Wisteria over the pergola has undergone a hard pruning.



The Lagerstroemia (Crape Myrtle) climbing shrub, which graces the House windows, did not flower as abundantly this year compared to the previous year. This is likely due to the less favourable, sunnier conditions it thrives in.

On a more positive note, the Cornus kousa in Tom's Garden is a truly splendid specimen. This year, it has looked particularly magnificent, adorned with a profusion of blooms.



Rod and Ann Clay celebrated 60 years of marriage this year and the anniversary fell on one of the Open days which they attended. To mark such a marvellous achievement, The Friends bought them a white rose (named Diamond Wedding) for their garden. The school very kindly bought a White Camellia which has been planted near Lady Swaythlings Urn in the Boudoir garden.



### VOLUNTEER WORKING 'POSSE' (TED WAITE)

In 2024 our lovely 'posse' of volunteers gathered on the Sunday mornings, the week before each Open Day, to help make the gardens look as good and tidy as they can for our visitors. Our focus for the year was mainly helping in the Sunk Garden, and the Deciduous Azalea bed plus the Rhododendron bed, where there is a never ending demand to clear and evict the unwanted grass, weeds and unrelenting Horsetail. We also scheduled an additional afternoon to pick apples from the orchard to raise funds for more plants on the September Open Day.

We extend our thanks to those who give their time, especially Anne Lancey (Volunteer) who has not only assisted in the gardens several additional days this year but very kindly donated several plants from her own garden, most notably several Irises. Also to Rod Clay who provides us with direction and knowledge and to Nicky P the school cook whose home made cake at half-time refreshments is probably the greatest incentive!

You don't need to be able to come to all the sessions or even all of any one session - we would encourage and welcome anyone to come along and do as much or as little as you are able to offer. The combined effort all counts and really does make a difference. It is such a treat to have the beautiful grounds to ourselves even if the occasional plane momentarily spoils the tranquillity. Just wear suitable clothing and bring implements for weeding.

Please do contact Ted Waite via email [Ted@thegreggschools.org](mailto:Ted@thegreggschools.org) and/or see more details on the website page <http://www.thegreggschool.org>. You will be given a very warm welcome and of course tea and cake!



### GARDEN OPEN DAYS 2025

Sunday, 23 March from 2.00pm to 4.00pm

Monday, 5 May (Bank Holiday) from 2.00pm to 5.00pm.  
Enjoy the bluebells and blossoms in the arboretum.

Sunday, 6 July from 2.00pm to 5.00pm  
This is when the gardens are most colourful.

Sunday, tbc September 2.00pm to 5.00pm  
This is Heritage Day and the house will again be open for guided tours by the school's students.



### MEMBERS ONLY DAYS 2025

tbc from 2.00pm to 5.00pm – Summer Picnic.

Bring your own picnic and a rug or your chairs to enjoy the gardens in full bloom. A basic BBQ will also be available with sausages and burgers.

tbc from 2.00pm to 5.00pm – Autumn Colours with a tour of the house or gardens. Help yourself to a bag of apples from the Orchard ... if there are any left to be had!

Members may also bring non-member guests to the picnics. We would ask that members' guests make a donation of £2 each towards the gardens.

The aim of these openings is for members to relax and enjoy the gardens.



### A TRIBUTE TO JANET HARLEY

Janet Harley, together with her husband David, were stalwarts in the restoration of Townhill Park House Gardens from the very beginning in March 1997. Both former laboratory scientists, they sought a new interest to enjoy together upon retirement and found the perfect project in the derelict gardens near their home.

Their dedication was unwavering. They would pack a picnic lunch and flasks of tea, ready to spend whole days working in the gardens. The school caretakers re-laid the paving in the Sunk Garden, and with the support of the Hampshire Gardens Trust, Janet and David began the arduous task of digging, weeding, and planting. They first tackled the long edging beds, following Gertrude Jekyll's detailed planting plans, and adapted them to withstand the resident deer. Their efforts resulted in a beautiful re-creation of Jekyll's intended design, earning high praise from experts like Prof. Timothy Mowl, who called the restoration "one of the greatest historic restorations in the entire county."

Janet's contributions extended beyond the Sunk garden beds. She took on the role of secretary for the Friends of Townhill Park House Gardens, diligently taking minutes at committee meetings. Alongside David, she also ran the raffle during the gardens' open days, raising funds to purchase new trees and plants. Their combined efforts ensured that the gardens thrived and grew even more beautiful over time. Even as they aged, Janet and David continued to care for the gardens until the Covid epidemic in 2020 halted volunteer activities. Sadly, Janet's health deteriorated, and she passed away in December 2023. David also faced health challenges and entered a care home.

The legacy of Janet and David Harley is deeply rooted in the gardens they loved so dearly. In tribute to Janet's contributions, a *Corylus Maxima Purpurea* tree was planted beside the Sunk Garden's entrance to the Arboretum, a nod to Gertrude Jekyll's tradition of planting hazel nuttrees.

Janet and David will always be remembered for their determination, enthusiasm, and the incredible transformation they achieved. Their love and care for Townhill Park House Gardens brought Gertrude Jekyll's century-old vision back to life, leaving a lasting impact on the community and all who visit. May their dedication inspire others to continue their work and cherish the beauty they helped restore.

(Thank you to contributions from Rosaleen Wilkinson, Rod Clay and Ann Clay – Member volunteers)





## THANK YOU TO PETER AND ROSALYN WILKINSON

We extend our considerable gratitude to Peter and Rosalyn Wilkinson. Both Peter and Rosalyn have decided to step down from the Friends committee. Both have given over 27 years of loyal and dedicated service to the Gardens, Peter as Treasurer and Rosalyn as the expert on the gardening of Gertrude Jekyll. Both played a vital role in the restoration of the gardens in 1997.

In recognition of their exceptional commitment, an *Exochorda racemosa* 'Blushing Pearl' shrub has been planted in the gardens near the Cricket pavilion. The plant has been thoughtfully placed near the cricket pavilion and the sunk garden cherry trees where it will flourish and bring beauty to the surroundings. We make this gesture to serve as a lasting tribute to their dedication and outstanding contribution over the years.

