

October 2023

Dear Member,

All organisations evolve and change over time and the Trustees have been spending time looking back at what they have achieved over the last 13 years and beginning to plan for the next decade.

With some new members and lots of new people moving into the villages I wanted to share the story about how the Wild Gardens came under the stewardship of the local community.

"The Wild Garden: A Community Treasure, A Remarkable Journey"

In the heart of our village lies a hidden gem, a place of natural beauty and tranquillity known as "The Wychwood Wild Garden." Its story is one of community spirit, dedication, and the preservation of a cherished piece of land.

We pick up the history of The Wild Garden in 1947 when Shipton Court was divided into lots and sold at auction. It was then that the house and grounds were purchased by Mrs. Arathoon in 1948, and they remained in her family's ownership until 1977.

In the more recent years The Wild Garden was under the careful ownership of Brian Gorton, an experienced woodsman; he had a vision for this space as a woodland area and embarked on a mission to plant 2,000 trees over three decades.

The Wild Garden was a beloved spot among villagers, many of whom had permission to walk in the Garden. Brian Gorton shared the community's sentiment of preserving this special place but the maintenance and upkeep were becoming more of a burden than a pleasure. In 2009, he approached the Parish Council offering the Garden for sale on the condition that it was never to be developed. The decision was taken to form a charitable company to oversee the purchase and management of the new project.

After meetings in all three villages the response from the community was overwhelming. A campaign rallied support and raised an initial £30,000 through individual pledges which was increased with many local fundraising events. This financial backing allowed the community to acquire The Wild Garden in July 2010, marking the beginning of a new era for this cherished space. However, before it could be officially opened, safety measures had to be put in place.

The journey to transform The Wild Garden into a community asset has not been without its challenges. Nature itself occasionally tests the resolve of those who care for this space, such as the unexpected fall of a veteran beech tree, which caused some collateral damage. Yet, these challenges have only strengthened the community's commitment to preserving and enhancing The Wild Garden.

The spirit of this project extends beyond its physical transformation; it symbolises the power of a united community coming together to protect something they hold dear. This shared effort resulted in The Wild Garden being officially opened in December 2010, and it has since become a place of solace, inspiration, and natural wonder for all who visit.

In the words of Mike Watson, one of the key figures in this transformation, "We had no idea what we were in for, but we're so glad we said yes to Brian Gorton!" The Wild Garden is a living testament to that 'yes,' a flourishing testament to the spirit of community, and a cherished space for all to enjoy.

To continue our stewardship three new Trustees have been appointed to the board.

David Yules

11 years in Shipton under Wychwood, the longest I have lived anywhere as an adult. Prior to that, 10 years in Witney. 40 years in industry in a variety of management positions, latterly in a European role with responsibility for Safety and Environment.

I joined the Wild Garden as a member when we first moved to the Wychwoods and began volunteering in May 2021

Interests include many sports, travelling, walking (even more since we got a dog), gardening (I have an allotment in Shipton), nature and environmental issues

I have a passion for the Wild Garden. The Wychwoods have many things to commend them as a place to live, but the Wild Garden is a unique resource. I want to do all I can to contribute to the long term future of this wonderful space and can offer enthusiasm, practicality, "can do" attitude and the ability to work with others in an open and cooperative way.

Graham Smith

We moved to Milton-under-Wychwood in December 2020 and we are delighted to be in such a friendly environment. The move coincided with me becoming semi-retired, something I was planning to do anyway but which was accelerated by the pandemic. Now fully retired I am able to do more voluntary work and give back to the community.

Now we have moved, apart from joining other volunteers each Tuesday morning at the Wild Garden, and helping to make some improvements to local footpaths, my wife and I also did some voluntary work at the Wychwood Surgery and Chipping Norton Health Centre supporting the vaccination drive. I have joined the MUW Parish Council so that I can make a more substantial voluntary contribution.

I have an eclectic working background, starting off in the coal and steel industries, then a stint in local government, insurance and finally management consultancy. But in each industry the focus of my work has been project management. I like to think that has produced in me a strong work ethic with a very practical bent to getting things done while working in teams with a wide range of people.

Rob Dyer

I'm a local lad having been born and brought up in Woodstock and have now lived in Shipton for over 20 years having moved here in year 2000. I have been retired for a number of years but had a 30 year career working in IT, starting as a computer programmer and evolving into systems design and consultancy working on mainframe financial systems.

My interests include running, cycling and tennis as well as daily walks with our dog. I also enjoy a bit of photography as well as gardening and DIY around the home. I spent over 5 years as a Councillor on Shipton Parish Council until leaving in May 2022 and I am still a regular helper for the Shipton Volunteers. I'm keen to take on another volunteer role and would be interested in pursuing that in relation to the Wild Garden.

The board is delighted to welcome David, Graham and Rob to the team of Trustees as they begin to plan for the next decade.



Caroline Trevers
Trustee

P.S. If you would like to receive this newsletter by email in the future, please let us know and we will add your email address to our database.