

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 68 May 2023

In this edition of In a Nutshell

CAKE MONEY

FRUIT CAGE PROGRESS

STANDEN BIRD LIFE

AGM MEETING

MEMORIES OF STANDEN

AND FINALLY...

Who ate all the pies?

This is just a gentle reminder that the cakes Sally Roberson generously donates to the Wednesday and Thursday volunteers are given on the understanding that, if you eat, you put 20p into the FoSE cake money pot which is beside the hot water machine. Our treasurer went to empty it to pay the money in recently and found that there was something of a deficit - around £20 collected since last August. Given the amount of cake that has been consumed in recent months, there should have been much more than that!

If you have been indulging in ignorance, please make a contribution next time you are at Standen. With the cake pot is the pot where you pay your contributions towards milk for your tea and coffee, so it's easy to find. I am aware that we don't all always carry much small change these days, but you can always pay for five slices at once and put a pound in. Then you can forget about it for 5 weeks. In the past, cake money has funded a whole load of Rhododendron and Azalea plants, which we and the visitors can all enjoy, so do please continue to eat cake!

Sleepers on the job

This is not a label which could be given to the kitchen garden volunteers who have been busy making the first moves on preparing the site for the new fruit cage. Glynn Jones reports that a start has been made now the site has been cleared.

It may not look much but after much careful measurement and by remembering our school geometry, we have been able to start the foundations for the fruit cage in the kitchen garden. The whole site slopes so we are taking pains to stop it all sliding into Weirwood. James has bought railway sleepers, posts and a huge bag of gravel to make sturdy foundations. We just need a team of 20-somethings to help hump it around.

It looks like a very professional job has been begun. Any offers to join the team?



Avian des res



One of the joys of volunteering at Standen is hearing the bird song and frequently having a robin assistant as you work. The birds have chosen a variety of nesting sites on the property over the years, with the robins frequently favouring the stable yard. One year they nested in the hose by the gate, which put it out of action until the babies fledged. This year, their chosen maternity ward was the old pump in the stable yard, where they hatched their eggs in the space behind the lead spout. The parents seemed quite happy to flit in and out with all us humans clodhopping around and cleaning tools nearby. The fledglings have flown now; I wonder where they will choose to nest next year?



Another nest caused some head-scratching. In the middle of the pond in the rosery is a nest clearly made by some kind of water bird. However, although Standen is rich in song-birds, no-one remembered seeing any birds on the pond recently. At least, not since mallards made use of the long defunct duck house. So, it's a bit of a mystery. Did some young

water bird lose her way and start constructing a nest she then abandoned, realising it was not the best place to raise a family. Or has someone been pulling our legs and placed a spoof nest in the pond. If you think you can solve the mystery, please email newsletter@fose.org.uk and I'll put the answer in the next newsletter.



You have to look carefully at the first picture to see the nest. It is at the far end of the pond, just in front of the point where the wall breaks to allow the steps down to the pond.

News from a short AGM

The business of the AGM, ably conducted by Anne Scutt, was gone through quickly as usual. Tim Roberson and Jackie Apps both stood down from the committee, so we have a couple of vacancies if anyone would like to join us. Gareth Rees, whose articles you have no doubt read in the property newsletter, has agreed to be Chair for the coming year. Otherwise, roles remain unchanged. James presented me with the Presidents' Award, which now stands in pride of place above my desk. Thank you, James.



How things have changed

James then gave a talk on some of the changes he has seen and memories of events at Standen over the years.

There were several references to the period of the Garden Restoration - often in terms of how muddy the winter was in the first year. A picture of Grandfather's Walk complete with wisteria-covered summerhouse and 'box blobs' (James' words, not mine) was juxtaposed with another showing the empty muddy bed where the Limes now flourish and a water-filled trench running alongside and then crossing the lawn, ready to take a new electric cable. Another area which was under mud for a time in 2014 was what is now the Rock Top Walk. While the cherry laurel was being removed, Rock Top Quagmire would have been a more appropriate name.



The Kitchen Garden changed out of all recognition during the Garden Restoration period, and a run of photos, beginning with Carolyn as a volunteer in 2008, showed new areas being incorporated and Yew hedges being planted, along with the disaster of the newly set up old VR building collapsed in a heap after a storm.

Other pictures reminded us of a series of changes at that time - proper edging to the beds in the Courtyard (which had been used as a car park at one time), and a delivery of good topsoil so that plants had a chance of growing there. The fiddly grass edging along the Lower Terrace border went, too, and at the same time, the wall behind it was rebuilt. Many photos showed just how overgrown some areas of the garden were. Extensive pruning in recent times has let a lot more light in and opened up views of the house.

For a time, the sloping bed between the Croquet Lawn and Kitchen Garden was a riot of colour thanks to beautiful herbaceous plants which were donated to Standen. Unfortunately, the thing which grew best in the bed was the



bindweed, and in the end, the unequal struggle to control it was abandoned. An empty bed made it easier to get rid of the bindweed and since that time many different things have been trialled in the space.

While bemoaning the fact that the Quarry Garden Bridge is still awaiting the funding needed for repairs, James recalled a possible method for fund-raising. Many years ago, there was a concrete fountain with three cherubs in the Quarry Garden pond. Visitors used to throw in the occasional coin - Angela Hogman, a long-standing volunteer, remembers fishing the coins out and washing them. When the concrete fountain failed, James replaced it with a resin version from *World of Water*. Maybe because this fountain featured a nude female, the amount of money thrown in increased considerably. Unfortunately, again in James' words, she eventually sprung a leak and had to be discarded.



Talking of leaks, in 2012, Standen held a *Garden of Lights* event at Christmas. This featured, among other things, tin soldiers from *The Nutcracker*. Made from old oil barrels, they filled with water over the winter, with the result that they became too heavy to move. The only option was to tilt them and let the water run out. The result was what looks like some very ungentlemanly behaviour on the House Terrace.

So those who came to the AGM were treated to a very entertaining talk, and my thanks goes to those who heeded my plea to attend.

And finally....

When FoSE was set up, and there were discussions about a logo, James drew this prototype logo, which I think is rather lovely and very artistic although, in the end, the simpler version which appears at the top of this newsletter was the one adopted.

