

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 72 January 2024

In this edition of In a Nutshell

FoSE calendar

ANOTHER FOSE PROJECT COMPLETED

BURN BABY BURN

PARENTHOOD FOR JAMIE

NEWS FROM THE TUESDAY GROUP

DIGGING FOR VICTORY?

THE WAY IT WAS

AND FINALLY...

And it's up and ready to go

It is only about a year ago that Carolyn first approached FoSE about funding for a new fruit cage for the Kitchen Garden. The old one was 14 years old and no longer fit for purpose, not to mention probably being a hazard to passers-by. The committee's response was initially doubtful. We could afford the sleepers for the preliminary work, but as the minutes of the January meeting show:



this is a costly enterprise and may only be achieved by several years of fund-raising

You may recall that we ran a quiz night last March, which raised around £500 towards the fruit cage project, but the biggest injection of cash came from our bid to *Gatwick Airport Communities Trust*. They responded to our request for a grant to the tune of £2,500. The offer did come with strings attached, that the work had to be completed by the end of 2023. However, they allowed us a little leeway; the cage was completed in the second week of January and very fine it looks too.

All credit must go to the many kitchen garden volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the last year to make the project a success. First, they had to dismantle and remove the old cage. Then they had to level the site and fix railway sleepers around the perimeter. Once these were in place there was a bit of a hiatus while the cage was ordered. When it arrived, it was realised that some extra parts were needed to make a good fix between the frame and the sleepers, so there was a further delay. When erection started, there were more teething problems, but the intrepid kitchen garden volunteers overcame them and so the frame of the cage is now complete. Next step is to add topsoil to further level the ground, and then add netting. Carolyn is now putting together a list so that James can order the plants required to get the new system up and running.

Kitchen gardener Glyn Jones has been with the project every step of the way, so here is his account of the work undertaken, and the reasons for it.



At last, the Kitchen Garden team is almost there with the new fruit cage. Back in 2022 when we leaned on the old wooden structure and it fell over, little did we know how much work (and funding) would be involved in putting up a new one. We initially made the old structure safe with some battening from a builder's skip but soon realised that we were one storm away from an unfortunate incident.

Having then knocked down the cage we saw that the ground sloped more than a meter back to front and our first job through the summer of 2023 was to build new foundations out of railway sleepers and fill them in with soil whilst trying to preserve existing plants. We moved all the rhubarb to

another plot on the Kitchen Garden and replanted various fruit bushes within the new foundations. The patients are all doing well!

The new steel cage arrived in the Autumn, and we started assembly - just a giant Meccano set really! Some hiccups along the way as we moved from Plan A through to Plan D or thereabouts but at last the new cage stands tall and will not be blowing over any time soon. The netting will be fully installed in the next weeks after a final layer of rich topsoil has been added. The volunteers have loved doing this job and we are proud of the achievement. If you have ever tried to lift a railway sleeper you will understand some of the hard work involved but the whole team joined in the various tasks to show that we have not forgotten old skills from our former working lives!



We are already looking forward to our first fruit harvest.

Was this the biggest bonfire ever?

At the beginning of January, the Thursday group was 'invited' to have a bonfire.

Theoretically, this was designed to celebrate Carolyn's 15 years at Standen. A similar event had been planned for the actual day but was defeated by the weather. The expert fire starters - Roger, Phil and Bob - were tasked with setting the central pile ablaze, while the minions, of whom, fortunately, there were many in attendance that day, were set to feeding the beast.





There was plenty of material, spread out in a huge ring surrounding the central blaze. In fact, the first task was to find a point where we could climb over the pile in order to set to work. As well as the usual fire fodder, there were huge tree trunks, cut into chunks, but still needing a two-man team to roll them into the fire.

At first it seemed like a hopeless task to get

everything onto the fire. However, when the volunteers stopped for lunch, James continued, making heroic efforts to reduce the pile. When the volunteers returned, it was clear that pretty much all that was waiting would get burned that day, so they went home with the sense of a good job done.

Unfortunately, like the weeds, the pile is growing again...



Welcome, baby Eleanor

We all mourned the departure of popular gardener Jamie Ball back in autumn '22, when he and his partner moved to Dorset to buy a home of their own. Dorset life is clearly suiting them, and he recently sent James a lovely picture of the latest addition to the Ball household, baby Eleanor, who arrived on 9th January. Congratulations to all concerned.

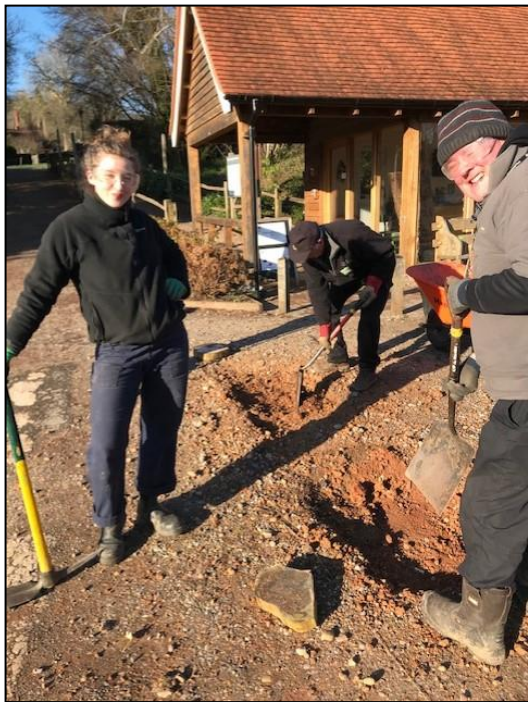
The hot in the cold

The Tuesday Garden Group is a small and select one, and as such, has been given responsibility for key areas close to the

house. Pat Felgate has offered this update of their recent work.

The Tuesday volunteers have been busy maintaining the hot bed and lower terrace. The badgers have been having fun digging up all the bulbs that have been planted. The last of the perennials and grasses have been cut down and cleared; the trellis bed has been tidied and some additional perennials have been planted. We have filled the house terrace beds with wallflowers, all grown by Carolyn, which should make a lovely display in the spring. Bill and Terry have put in some new brick edging to the path on Goose Green. Their next project is edging the beds in the tea garden.

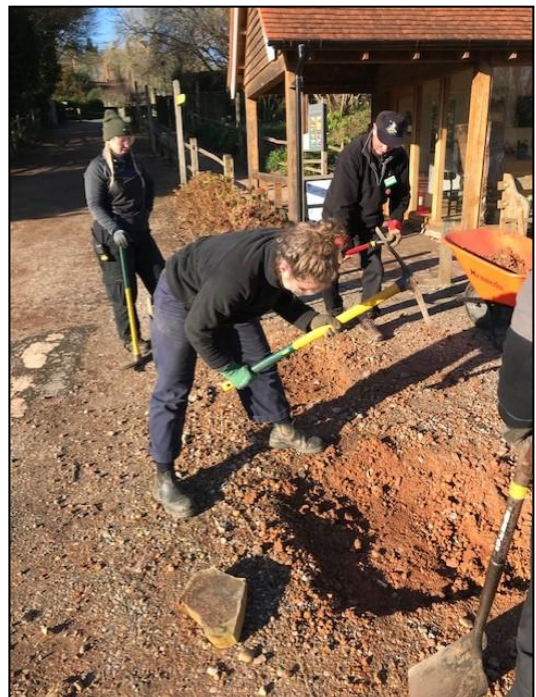
It's only six inches



The safety of visitors has always been a major concern at Standen, and since VR moved down to the car park there has been some disquiet about cars turning into the car park where visitors are waiting outside Visitor Reception to be 'processed'. To avoid anyone being run down, the decision was taken to place two new flower beds so that cars have to drive around them to park. Digging them out from the hard surface of the car park, compacted by many years' traffic, was the task confronting the Thursday volunteers in mid-January. James assured them that the hard surface was only

six inches deep, and that they would soon find the soil underneath.

Armed with pickaxes and crow bars, the tougher members of the team - plus the intrepid Marina - set to work, with everyone taking turns at the back-breaking stone-breaking. Those with smaller muscles - or a stronger sense of self-preservation - continued the task of clearing the bank behind the car park of brambles and other nasties, revealing several hidden rhododendrons in the process.





At the end of the day, one flower bed was already outlined and ready to be lined with sleepers, and the temptation was clearly too much for Marina, who had already retired to a wheelbarrow earlier in the afternoon. It's a good job she has Lauren to keep her under control.



Mud, glorious Mud

If you think this winter has been wet and muddy, cast your mind back to 2014, near the beginning of the Garden Restoration Project, and the clearance of the Top Terrace area in preparation for the Rock Top Walk. Now that's muddy...



...though James' dog Annie didn't seem to mind. The tree stump on the left is where the Bothy now stands.





In the following picture, the old, underground reservoir in this part of the garden is visible.



In the final photo, the South Downs Volunteers can be seen building the sleeper steps.

Thanks to James for sharing these pictures to remind us how it was ten years ago, and how much progress has been made since.

And finally...

FoSE is now in year 9 of a 10-year programme of buying snowdrops for Standen. This year's contingent will be planted either side of the sleeper steps in the picture above, complementing those already planted in the area above.

