

Diary of the New Church Garden

Spring 2002 In spring 2002, the church garden had become very overgrown with iris foetida, hellebores, self-seeded poppies, various cottage garden plants that had become straggly, and plenty of weeds. The soil level was much higher than the one existing path and area for the bench so that mud and gravel spread over them. A dirty, cream coloured wall opposite the garden, which was part of the hall owned by the Samaritans, added little to the effect. It was time for a garden re-make!

Summer 2002 In the summer a Garden Working Group was formed with Sabrina Lewins as convenor. Members included Pat Bateman, John Coates, Shirley Fieldhouse, Marie Jones, Jo Turtill, Andrew Schofield, Roland Thomas, and Bernice Wright. The first meeting of this group was held in the common room on July 28. The group decided to have paths, a central planting area, and raised area for the bench, which would be built by a commercial builder. Sabrina submitted a design to the committee a week later and this was approved. In consultation with the builder, it was decided that the wall adjoining the garden should also be repainted and that three fan trellises would be attached to it for climbing plants.

The Church Committee accepted an estimate for the work from the Graduate Construction Company and agreed that funding for the project would come from legacy left by Barbara Tallerman, a former parishioner. By a happy coincidence, Miss Tallerman was an acquaintance of the head of the building firm, Mike Kulnynycz, and this made his part in the work very special to him.

November 2002 All plants were removed from the garden at the end of November and construction work began in early December, fortunately during a spell of dry weather. The reason for the late start, was due to the Mackenzie School who used the church hall during term time and would have been inconvenienced if work had started before the end of term.

Once the building work was completed, a very wet winter prevented any attempt to rebuild the garden until March. A few plants were re-planted at the end of February and a spring bed created by Sabrina and John but the heavy clay soil made the work very difficult indeed and no new plants were chosen until the ground dried out. Donations from some church members were collected to buy new plants.

Spring 2003 On Sunday 9 March 2003, a second Garden Group meeting was held to discuss purchases for the new garden, including what types of plants should be selected. On Friday March 21, Jo, Pat, Marie and Sabrina spent a chilly morning selecting plants, tubs, hose, and composts from Scotsdales Garden Centre. These were delivered the following Wednesday morning.

On Saturday 29 March, 5 members of the group plus one volunteer and the minister set to work, first removing some of the heavy clay soil to bring it down to a

lower level, then digging in sacks of compost. Tubs were placed by the trellises and were planted with clematis and honeysuckle. Most of the new shrubs were also planted, though darkness overtook the team before all the work could be completed. A very happy blackbird and a robin followed progress carefully and helped themselves to worms from time to time, expressing great approval at our efforts.

The following Monday afternoon the rest of the shrubs were planted by 4 members of the group, more digging over was done and mulch spread around all plants. Subsequently, plants were purchased and added by members of the group as money became available.

Kevin Cribb, a retired stone engraver, offered to make a plaque for the garden as a personal contribution. The following words by the founder of Unitarianism (David) were chosen to give an inspiration for meditation and beauty to the garden.

“You need not think alike to love alike”

An annual budget of 250 pounds for the garden was allocated by the Church Committee. Donations were received from many members of the congregation and a percentage of the money earned by selling “Fair Trade” goods was also given to the garden group.