



# SAVING SOUTH CLIFF GARDENS

Monthly Update January 2020—Happy New Year!



***Hello and welcome to  
the South Cliff Gardens  
Monthly Update!***

*Here we will share all the most  
recent news from the South Cliff*



*Friends of South Cliff Gardens*



*A great place to live, work & play*

**SouthernGreen**

## WINTER ON SOUTH CLIFF

**The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch is coming!**

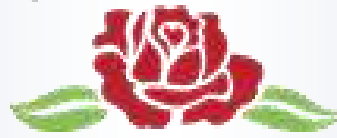


Wrap up warm and join us for this year's RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. We will be running one hour bird watching sessions on Sunday 26th and Monday 27th January. Meet us at the South Cliff Clock Tower at 10.30am, 12.00pm or 1.30pm and we will take care of the rest.

If you know any budding ornithologists who can't wait for the event, Scarborough Library has a special bird trail you can follow; just drop in and ask for a spotting sheet.



# Friends of South Cliff Gardens



Our wonderful volunteers enjoying a hot drink and a mince pie at Farrers. A great group of people who have given many hours of work through the year.



Yes, that really is the Christmas tree in Prince of Wales Garden being installed by Roger and Sheila. Many thanks to the Red Lea Hotel for their generous sponsorship of this beacon of light, which brightened up everyone's Christmas.



# Friends of South Cliff Gardens



The volunteers were busy in early December working in Shuttleworth Gardens, cutting back, clearing leaves and planting bulbs.



End of November on an unlikely day for our volunteers with very wet dreary weather, but enough turned up to plant the empty St Martin's Square bed. So another big thank you to the volunteers and to B&Q for providing the plants.





# SouthernGreen

## Tree Works

Many of you will have seen the Tree Works team out and about at South Cliff undertaking the proposed tree management works. We know it can be alarming to see large trees cut down and would like to reassure everyone that the long terms benefit to the woodland resource at South Cliff Gardens and the restoration of some of the original design intent will be worth the short term disturbance. Many of the trees within the gardens are in poor health and these trees account for many of the proposed removals. Some of the issues impacting tree health could be due to restricted growth opportunity, bark stripping from the large grey squirrel population or in some cases age/disease. In some areas, those fading trees are providing an ecological resource and, where safe, we have looked to retain standing stumps. As these stumps gradually degrade they could provide habitat and food resource for many creatures within the gardens. We are also looking at proposals for reintroduction of some lying stumps to again provide an ecological gain within the woodland.



In other places around the gardens, particularly in the Holbeck area, significant Sycamore regeneration has overcrowded areas of the woodland. This is affecting tree form and creating a monoculture with limited growth on the woodland floor due to the closed canopy nature of the densely growing young Sycamore trees. By thinning these

areas we hope to open the canopy allowing light to permeate, giving some of the younger retained trees space to grow and to open views between the switch back paths of the park improving the sense of safety and security while also opening visual connectivity to the foreshore and restoring historic views. Through our proposed scheme of planting we will in the long term reinvigorate the planting at South Cliff Gardens: through specimen shrub and tree planting in the feature areas of the gardens including the Rose Garden, Italian Gardens and Shelters; through woodland edge planting along opened areas of woodland providing some understorey and shrub species to define the woodland edge and improve biodiversity and; through planting of a feature avenue of ornamental pear along the arrival path to South Cliff from the Cliff Bridge to the north of the site.



We appreciate your patience as these works continue and we hope to be complete by the end of February well in advance of the nesting season. As ever, if you see the team out working and have any questions please continue to stop to talk (when it is safe to do so) as many of you already have and if you have any other questions or comments that you'd like to submit to Scarborough Borough Council or Southern Green Landscape Architects, please get in touch via the contact at the end of the newsletter and we'll be happy to discuss.



# SouthernGreen

## Branding

Southern Green is hard at work with Scarborough Borough Council's Graphic Design team looking at branding, signage and a fantastic new website for South Cliff Gardens. Influenced by the myriad styles, features and logos prevalent in the gardens today and in historic photography and documentation. We're looking to create a classic feel that references the garden's grand history while looking to its future, following Scarborough Borough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund restoration works. We're hoping to unveil some of the park's new look features during the next month and we'll be looking for your input during the coming months in developing content for the park's interpretative signs and wayfinding features.



# PROJECT OFFICER BLOG

***“Accessibility is not a feature, it’s a social trend.” — Antonio Santos***

I’m not a fan of the word ‘disability’ but I do not have a better replacement for it (recommendations welcomed). I don’t like the word because it suggests people are not ‘able’, which I passionately disagree with. I believe you can do anything if you put your mind to it, no matter who you are or where you come from. The problem is that in this country we do not put enough emphasis on, or investment in creating spaces to live that are accessible to everyone. Even Number Ten has a step up to the front door! In my eyes I see inaccessible environments as inadequate, not the people who have limited use of them.

When designing public open spaces, accessibility is at the top of my list of priorities. I feel there’s no point in creating beautiful green spaces if only some people within our communities can access them, enjoy their heritage and reap the health and wellbeing benefits they have on offer. This is a belief I share with our amazing funder, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which is a passionate campaigner for accessible heritage.

## **The South Cliff accessibility challenge**

To create a South Cliff Gardens that is accessible, is a titanic challenge. The cliff-side environment has many physical design restrictions to accessibility. Stabilisation is an enormous consideration and therefore no land modelling or changes to steep slopes are possible without compromising the stability. The cliff lift with its tunnel that’s been blocked for many years cuts off the only step free access through the garden. The few existing toilet facilities on site are not currently accessible and due to the nature of the heritage setting, cannot be retrofitted to be so. On top of this, the reduction in maintenance during the last 50 years has left the site overgrown, dark and has given it a feeling of being an unsafe place.

When most people think about accessibility they think about people who use wheelchairs, but barriers to accessibility can also be physical, mental, social or cultural and often unseen.

During my privileged time working on the South Cliff Gardens project one of the most fascinating things I’ve learnt is the power that social and cultural barriers can have. When I first arrived in Scarbados (as the kids call it) I invested a lot of my time in listening to people from across the town to understand why they do not use the gardens. I was often told *“people from the north of Scarborough do not go to the South Cliff as that’s where the posh people go”*. I couldn’t understand for the life of me where this comment was founded, but I heard it repeatedly. When delving deeper, I discovered that the comment typically came from families that were told this by their grandparents, who were told it by their grandparents. Interestingly I found out that back in the day, the South Cliff gardens were enclosed by toll gates, which meant that they were only available to the affluent. I believe this identity of the space a hundred years ago has been inherited, passed down through the generations and has created a deeply embedded social belief that the South Cliff Gardens are not open to all. Although it is not a physical barrier, it is stopping people making use of the gardens and is probably one of the most difficult to break.



# PROJECT OFFICER BLOG

## **What we are doing to improve accessibility in the South Cliff Gardens**

For those of you who have been following the gardens' journey, you will know that we carried out dementia and disability audits of the space with the help of people living with dementia, visual impairments and other disabilities, physical and hidden. We took the recommendations from these audits and built them into the new design for the gardens. They include the following:

- Create two new fully accessible toilets and an accessible changing facility with three further ambulant toilets.
- Build a new community building that is fully accessible, including disabled parking.
- Ensure all wayfinding is dementia friendly and easy to read for people with visual impairments. The exits will be clearly labelled.
- Open the tunnel under the cliff lift to create a step free access through the gardens on the most accessible route. Unfortunately this route still has some unchangeable gradients that do not comply with a fully accessible standard but it is the most inclusive standard we can achieve. People in motorised wheelchairs and assisted wheelchairs will be able to access this route.
- Provide handrails to all the main flights of steps.
- Improve the drainage so that there's no standing water on hard surfaces.
- Train all our Grounds Maintenance staff to become Dementia Friends.
- Create an accessible project webpage and app.
- Build a new playground.
- Invest to uplift the standard of management and maintenance during the next 10 years.
- Develop a programme of accessible and inclusive activities, which will be delivered during the next five years to actively encourage people to come together and enjoy our beautiful heritage.

If you have any questions about accessibility, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me; I'd love to hear from you.



# PROJECT OFFICER BLOG



## **Japanese knotweed**

Back in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a chap called Phillip Von Siebold, a botanist and travel fan, fell in love with a Japanese knotweed plant, which he found growing on the side of a volcano in Japan and brought the plant back to Europe. The plant was so popular by 1850 it was being grown in nurseries and widely sold to the public. Widely admired because of its bamboo-like appearance, it was soon seen as a prized ornamental plant sort by many.

Local governments even started to use the plant to strengthen river banks, road embankments and railways as it was well known to have a fast growing root system. Construction projects such as road, rail and canal in the early 1900s quickly spread the plant across the country.

The plant's appeal was lost in the mid 1900s when national governments declared the plant a threat to native species, waterways and structures. Today the World Conservation Union lists the plant as one of the world's worst invasive species.

Japanese knotweed is present within South Cliff Gardens. If you are curious about where you can see examples of it, it is retained within the areas of red and white fencing that has been erected within the gardens. The fencing serves to clearly identify the knotweed zones to avoid the risk of spreading the plant further afield by people entering the zones unaware.

We will be treating the weed with herbicide and it will take three years to eradicate the plant using this method. During the restoration project, we will not be able to carry out any works within these zones. Our Parks Team will be monitoring the knotweed monthly, but if you spot any areas of the plant within the gardens that are not fenced off, please get in touch and let us know as soon as you spot it.

Victoria Thompson

South Cliff NLHF Project Officer

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER BLOG

Let me begin by saying Happy New Year. It's hard to believe that we have reached 2020 already! It's an exciting time ahead for the project to save South Cliff Gardens. Capital works will get underway this year as will a programme of events and activities aimed at encouraging visitors old and new to get involved in the gardens and their rejuvenation.

Our first event of the new decade (as you will probably have seen earlier in this newsletter) is in support of the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. The team and I are eager to get out into the glorious Italian Gardens and to play some part in this calendar favourite. We are delighted to announce that on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January we will be joined by volunteers from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who will be on hand to lend their expertise. We think it's a great opportunity to get involved with the South Cliff Gardens regeneration project and join more than half a million people in helping to discover how our feathered friends are doing.

Sadly there's no doubt that the nation's garden birds need our help. According to the RSPB, the charming little garden sparrow, formally a common site on British bird tables, has declined by an alarming 60% since the 1970s whilst starling numbers have plummeted by a staggering 71%. So it's some comfort to know that the data gathered will be used to help scientists spot problems like these and importantly try to find strategies to put things right!

It's not just wildlife that benefits from participating in schemes like the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch. On bleak midwinter days when darkness seems to descend with the flick of a switch and the weather is set to gloomy with a side of rain, it's tempting to hunker down at home. However we challenge you to battle that sofa, put down the remote, grab your biggest scarf and get down to the gardens, because as the old saying goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing and getting outside is good for you.

Scientists now link getting out into nature with a myriad of health benefits from improving the immune system to boosting mood so don't just limit your time outside to the birdwatch. It's recommended that we all spend at least one hour a week in natural environments and it's not too late to add an extra resolution to the New Year's list.

Taking part in a group activity like the birdwatch can also go some small way to alleviating feelings of loneliness that often seem more acute at this time of year. I recently attended a seminar hosted by the YMCA on the health of the borough. Social isolation and loneliness were pinpointed as being major issues affecting residents of all ages and backgrounds. Whilst no easy solutions could be found in the course of an afternoon, it was clear that the dialogue has begun. This silent and often hidden issue is not only being drawn out into the light, but strategies like the fantastic "Say Hello" campaign are leading the way in trying to improve lives across Scarborough.

There's lots more to come from us this year, including an inaugural family book festival and the launch of an exciting new oral history project supported by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. So watch this space and also take a look at the contact us page for suggestions on ways you can get involved. I look forward to hearing from you.

Gemma Alexander

Community Engagement Officer





## Saving South Cliff Gardens Benches Appeal



Across Scarborough's South Cliff Gardens there are more than 300 memorial benches commemorating the many people and families who, over the years, have fallen in love with Scarborough's South Bay. People from across the world have taken out leases for benches to lay down their legacy within the stunning setting of the South Cliff Gardens. However over the years some information about these leases has regrettably been lost.

Saving South Cliff Gardens is appealing for people to come forward and claim their memorial benches. We would like to unlock these hidden personal connections and reinstate their place within the South Cliff Gardens.

In March this year Scarborough Borough Council and the local community were awarded a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to renovate the South Cliff Gardens. The proposed work will include refurbishing some of the benches and tidying up around some of them to reinstate the stunning views. The modern metal benches will be replaced with heritage equivalent designed benches to be more holistic within the special Victorian landscape.

If you have a lease for a bench within the South Cliff Gardens or on the Esplanade we'd love to hear from you. We'd like to hear your stories and hidden social connections and get your input. In return we will keep you in the loop about our plans for the site and what will happen to your benches.

Please get in touch with us via the contact page at the end of this newsletter.

# CONTACT US

Please get in touch

From April we will be commencing an Oral History project aiming to explore people's memories of South Cliff Gardens, both distant and more recent. If you're interested in getting involved in the project, would like to know more or you have a special memory, a great story or an interesting photo you would like to share, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

## **Volunteers needed**

Do you have a love of literature and all things book related?

We need you for our inaugural family book festival taking place on Saturday 25th April 2020 in the South Cliff Gardens.

So if you can spare an hour to read stories, have a great idea for a book themed craft stall or maybe you're an author or illustrator who's just burning to share your passion, we would love to hear from you!

The possibilities are endless so please get in touch with Gemma; she is keen to hear your ideas!

Website: <http://friendsofsouthcliffgardens.com/>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/southcliffgardens](http://www.facebook.com/southcliffgardens)

Twitter: [@HLFSCGardens](https://twitter.com/HLFSCGardens)

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Find out more about the Heritage Lottery Fund here:  
<https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us>

