



FRIENDS OF GRAPPENHALL HEYS WALLED GARDEN

www.friendsogfgrappenhallgarden.org.uk

Friends' Café

The original café, known as the Courtyard Café, was started in November 2008 by Elizabeth Fountain, who persuaded a team of volunteers from amongst members of the Friends to help. Initially, it was open only on the first Sunday of each month and at events. There were few facilities at that time – basically a kettle and hot water boilers. The menu was also basic, with drinks and cake only, and the seating area was in the “School Room”, where the present kitchen now is. The Friends purchased outdoor tables, which, on fine days, were put on the grass in the courtyard for the overflow.

With the help of the Parish Council, the facilities in the kitchen were gradually improved. At the same time, the Friends purchased additional equipment and the range of items on offer was extended to include toasties, toasted teacakes and scones, and one or two other occasional items of hot food. Crisps, canned drinks, ice lollies, etc. were also added to the menu – popular with the children. By this stage, the majority of cakes were homemade, for which the café became extremely well known.

With events being held on most Sundays from March/April to October, the decision was taken to open the café every Sunday. The “School Room” became too small to seat the numbers using the café, particularly when events were taking place, so in 2010 the Parish Council agreed to purchase a permanent gazebo to be installed in the courtyard, and the Friends, having obtained a considerable grant from Stronger Together towards the cost, contributed 50 % of the total cost. The gazebo proved extremely popular, with more and more visitors coming to the café as they had somewhere to sit out of the rain in inclement weather (although it had to be shared with an event at times!) and enjoy the homemade cakes.

Once a month, members of the local Womens Institutes staffed the café, which gave the other volunteers a break.

Visitor numbers in winter were quite low, so from November to March the café was open only on the first Sunday of the month, although it was often open on Boxing Day and New Years Day to catch those out walking off large meals from the day before!

The popularity of the café continued to grow, and it became the biggest individual fundraiser for the Friends. Early in its operation, the Friends' Executive Committee agreed that all the funds raised by the café should be reserved to be put towards the restoration of the glasshouses and backsheds. A large grant of £25,000 was allocated to the Parish Council to help with the required matched funding when it applied for the Heritage Lottery Grant.

As it was anticipated that work would start on the glasshouses in March 2013, the decision was taken to close the café after the first Sunday in March. All the kitchen equipment was removed and either put into storage or disposed of. This was unfortunate as work on the glasshouses didn't finally start until October 2013.

Once the new kitchen was in place, the Friends contributed over £12,000 for new equipment, including for the coffee machine and the crockery.

Once the restored glasshouses were re-opened, the Friends opened up the new café, again staffed by volunteers. Unfortunately, lots of the volunteers who previously staffed the café either were unable to or didn't return. This meant that, eventually, the Parish Council recruited a café manager, but the rest of the staff were still volunteers. Unfortunately, as we could not rely on all volunteers turning up on a regular basis, we decided that we could no longer continue, and the café had to close.

To ensure that there would be café open on Sundays, the Parish Council appointed an outside, commercial, business to re-open and run the café, which is the situation today.

In its 4 ½ years of operation, the whole team of volunteers did a marvellous job in running the café, achieving a 5* rating. Many £000s were raised towards the fantastic facilities which are in the glasshouses and garden, none of which would have been achieved without the unstinting help of all the volunteers.

Elizabeth was a member of the Working Group which obtained the Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the restoration of the glasshouses and backsheds - she had a big say in how the new kitchen would look, hence the use of purple on the walls! Sadly she didn't live to see her dream of the new café realised, but her name lives on in the name of the community glasshouse.



Tea	50p
Fresh coffee	70p
Fruit juice	50p
Orange Squash	20p
Cake	50p
Apple Pie and cream	£1.20

Early menu



Serving in the large gazebo



Outdoor seating



Volunteers with their Hygiene Certificates



The old "School Room"