**FONTMELL FRIENDSHIP GARDEN REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PCC MEETING 2023**

June 2023 represents the second anniversary of the formal opening of the Fontmell Friendship Garden and our third season of blooms. It continues to bring all ages in the community together in so many ways – through seed growing, planting, watering, maintenance and the associated activities.

Since last year’s annual PCC meeting, the Friendship Garden and all its volunteers have been busy.

ORGANISATION

The Friendship Garden operates through the village hall committee with Sian chairing a sub committee including Sarah Jane Glanville and Sue Morgan. Our fourth member, Briony Long sadly passed away in January having contributed hugely to the garden and its activities.

STAKEHOLDERS

Villagers – who grow seeds, donate plants, tend the garden and design beds.

Several beds are now designed and maintained by our active clubs.

The Garden Club, Art Club and Craft Group each have their own beds, which they design and plant.

The Fontmell under fives have three troughs which they plant with spring blooms and summer flowers.

St Andrew’s School have two beds which have sunflowers every year and they take part in additional initiatives.

Clayesmore Prep School have taken ownership of two beds at the entrance to the garden this year and have been involved in regular visits.

Springhead volunteers joined us this year on the important Hello Yellow Day.

Clayesmore senior school have a volunteering link with us and every year, we will welcome four or five year 12 students with their teacher to the garden. They work with us for an hour a week during term time. This has also extended into the cafes and we are fortunate to have more senior Clayesmore School students who help us every Wednesday afternoon at the lunches and cafes during term time.

INITIATIVES

**AUGUST 2022**- **NATIONAL PLAY DAY**

We opened the garden and welcomed families to the village hall for tea and games , with a bouncy castle. This day recognises the importance of play to children and provided a chance for families to get together over food and games.

**MAY- SEP 2022- WEEKLY POP UP CAFES**

Each Wednesday, we run a pop up café from 2-4 pm where we served tea and cakes to our community. We sold jars of joy and donations on the afternoons helped to provide vital funds for the garden. These have continued and have resumed from April 2023 until September 2023, continuing the fantastic work of the lunchtime warm hubs.

**OCTOBER 2022- HELLO YELLOW DAY**

As in 2021, we welcomed every child from St Andrew’s School to plant a yellow bulb in recognition of Hello Yellow Day – a day which shines a light on the importance of mental health in young people.

We were joined by village volunteers, teachers and volunteers from Springhead Trust on the afternoon. The craft club facilitated craft activities for every child and we served yellow drinks and yellow cake! We are passionate supporters of this cause and will continue to recognise this day annually.

**VISITS**

Cllr Val Pothecary was our guest with Cllr Jane Somper in July 2022 and we were delighted to show her the garden and share our work with her.

The High Sheriff of Dorset, Mrs King visited in October, where we could share our garden and activities.

The Happy Gatherings club visited us in July for their annual outing and we look forward to welcoming them again in July this year.

**AWARDS**

We were delighted to receive three awards.

1. Dorset Volunteering award – nominated by the PCC
2. High Sheriff of Dorset award for volunteering – nominated by Cllr Val Pothecary and Cllr Jane Somper
3. Level 5 and outstanding awarded by the RHS in the “ In your neighbourhood category”.

These awards are a tribute to the village and all the people involved in the garden and pop up café. There are so many activities which take place which enable the garden and café to function and so many people are involved and they deserve a huge thanks and recognition.

**GARDEN THEMES**

Every year, we choose a different theme for the garden to keep it fresh and interesting .

In our first year, we championed cut flowers for the village to enjoy . Cut flowers continue to be a driving force .

Last year, the Platinum Jubilee was the driving theme , with some incredibly creative planting.

This year – we had chosen the theme of “ colours of the rainbow” before we knew there would be a coronation. We have adapted and planted some beds with a coronation theme and others supporting the colours of the rainbow. One of our beds this year is dedicated to Briony Long and will be full of cut flowers in every colour possible in recognition of her hard work and support for the garden. We are additionally planting a magnolia outside the village hall in memory of Briony.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

We continue to aim to be as sustainable as we can – using a timed irrigation system for the garden, additional compost bins to generate our own compost, water buts, seed collection, bird and bug boxes, hedgehog houses, propogation of plants and reusing plant pots.

**FUNDING**

We have very healthy funds thanks to contributions from the cafes and funding from generous organisations. Waitrose nominated us as their project for the year, which provided vital funds. Knight Frank also provided a generous donation as did Clayesmore School. We thank everyone who has donated plants, seeds and for their donations at the cafes and fundraising events.

**PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

To continue to have a colourful and inclusive garden for all to enjoy and to ensure we are flexible and able to respond to any future changes.

Thank you to everyone for the help and support .

Sian Highnam 7.5.23