

Meeting of Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall with Anthony French, Open Space Officer (Horticulture), Cambridge City Council

Friday 13th April at Cherry Hinton Hall 12 noon

Friends present: Stuart Newbold, Ian Simmons, Judy Webb, Catherine Mills, David Taylor, Bob Daines, Sandra Day

Aim: Site walk to determine issues needing attention and an update on current works

Bob Daines drew our attention to a rotten Hawthorn tree that is situated between the house and the main Cherry Hinton Road. This has a very unsafe trunk, which is in danger of falling. Anthony agreed this will be removed and another tree planted in the area.

We discussed the large Sequoia trees, which stand either side of the front of the Hall and are due to be taken down. It does seem a shame to destroy these trees but when you realise that they are only one third of the maximum height they are capable of, it becomes obvious that they will damage the building if allowed to stay there. There is a beautiful example of this species about 100 yards from the Hall, towards the road.

The Hall is currently covered in a lot of ivy and Anthony has asked for this to be removed and any damage caused to be repaired. The Hall is a listed building so this work is very important to maintain the brickwork. There is also a plan to remove the Leylandii trees at the back of the Hall.

We walked over to look at the tennis courts and Anthony agreed that they should be returned to a useable state, as the lines need repainting, plus the net and posts are in need of replacement. We were pleased to see that all the play equipment is now working and all areas requiring rubber matting had been completed.

We mentioned Ken Woollard's Memorial artwork and Anthony confirmed he has passed this idea over to the relevant person working with the art section of the master plan for ideas.

The tactile board in the children's play area is still too high, making it difficult for children to actually reach the 'rubbing' section. Anthony agreed to get a step installed and get the sliding sections cleaned of sand and working. The nettles underneath need to be destroyed.

We moved around to the swan's nest and it was agreed that we need more protection for it. Anthony will arrange a section of chestnut fencing to be erected by the nest and a thicket of saplings planted in front to try to keep people out. When the hen moved we spotted an egg so hopefully we can protect the nest this year and see some cygnets.

We also spotted an area on the opposite bank to the viewing platform where the fence has been removed and nesting birds are being disturbed with people walking down the bank. Anthony agreed to also install chestnut fencing plus more planting to discourage access.

There are a lot of fallen branches in the wooded area on the island and it was agreed that the Friends would organise a work party to collect them up and make piles in the undergrowth to create habitats, and clear rubbish. A date is to be advised.

Anthony will arrange for some signage for the pond area. Now that the propagation centre fencing has been removed, it opens up the whole area giving access to the pond and the potential danger from dogs to the wildlife. We will need to work out what these signs say and where they will be placed, without spoiling the look of the area. It was felt that these signs need to state why dogs should be kept on leads and hopefully will make people understand the problem.

Anthony will arrange for the fencing running from the Hall down to the pond to be pulled back to allow access to the path, now that the building work has ended. There is damage to the grass where people have walked and this will soon repair once the path is back in use.

Anthony told us that there are three large green benches in the storage area at the Hall that were removed from another project in the city. He would like to take out the old benches by the pond and replace them with these reclaimed benches. They are not in pristine condition but we felt that the principle of reusing materials at no cost was a better idea than paying for them to be painted. The area around the pond has still to be finalised so until then these benches will be very useful. There is a fourth bench, which could be used elsewhere in the grounds.

Anthony informed us that the wire fencing surrounding the new grass will be staying in place until after the Folk Festival to ensure the grass has the best chance of taking. It has been sown with a hardwearing grassland mix but needs time to establish. The original fencing that has been removed from around the edge of this area will be erected along the concrete edge, with a double gate in to allow the Folk Festival to function.

We pointed out the large wooden box on top of the containers by the sheds, which contains white plastic sheeting, was an eye sore and Anthony agreed that next time the staff get out the forklift he will get them to remove it.

The post in the path by the drive behind the Hall, which stops anyone driving along in front of the building, needs a new padlock and the hasp will need to be freed to allow it to be locked.

Anthony informed us that he would be getting some saplings planted along the green balustrade for the depot which faces the tennis courts to soften the look. There are some left from the planting along the Brook from the sandy path right up to Dawes Lane.

Anthony mentioned that, together with the City Council's enforcement officer, he had visited the property on Walpole Road where fence panels had been removed, scaffolding erected, and a quantity of building debris fly-tipped into the Hall grounds. The occupant had advised Anthony that the works would be completed over the Easter break. This has not happened and it is expected that if there is no progress in the next week, the City Council will write with a deadline to put the area back as it should be, or they will engage someone to do the work and invoice the occupants.

We all agreed that at the moment there is a huge impact when you first see all the work that has been done but we have to think of the future and final look of the place, once all these new plants have established and grown. A copy of the master plan is on the notice board by the Hall for

everyone to look at. A bid to the National Heritage Lottery Board will be made for more funding, and the Friends will assist with the application.

It was agreed we would meet again at the end of June.

Sandra Day
FCHH Committee
16th April