

Warwick District GREEN SPACES

SEPTEMBER 2020

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Green Space of the Month Parliament Piece, Kenilworth

This local nature reserve, managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust in partnership with Warwick District Council, is 14 hectares of open grassland that provides the perfect habitat for a range of species.

The many types of tree include Turkey oaks, beech, field maple and Scots pine, some of which are impressively tall, and if you listen carefully on your visit you may hear the distinct sound of a woodpecker – why not take some binoculars to see if you can spot one?

It's also well worth walking slowly and pausing from time to time, to appreciate the biodiversity that this hay meadow provides. Hay cutting is followed by cattle grazing in the autumn period, which helps to prevent any species from becoming dominant, encouraging a diverse range of grasses and wildflowers. These in turn are greatly appreciated by butterflies, particularly the skipper and brown meadow butterflies, which can be seen in abundance on a good day.

There is also a pond, with ash and willow trees providing shade. Keep your eyes peeled for the common frog and smooth newt, both of which spawn in spring.

Popular myth has it that Parliament Piece got its name from Henry III's parliament meeting there during the great siege in 1266. However, this has been contested and some consider it more likely that Henry's parliament met at the Priory, as he had made this his base during the siege. Another theory is that Parliament Piece's name may have derived from Cromwell's troops using the site as their camp, during the English Civil War, to ensure they were safe from Royalist Muskets.

Regardless of how it got its name, we're pleased that this beautiful nature reserve can be enjoyed by so many today.

Access: the walking trails are flat, informal paths and access is via stiles. The paths can become muddy in winter.

Location: On the northern edge of Kenilworth, off Upper Spring Lane, Kenilworth, CV8 2JR



Postcards from Home Competition

As part of the Pump Room Gardens National Lottery funded project, the Green Spaces team are excited to launch a 'staycation' postcard design competition, which is open to all ages, primary schools and community groups.

Since its Victorian heyday, Royal Leamington Spa's much loved Pump Room Gardens have become known as the town's village green, a central meeting place, hosting countless events, a place to enjoy a picnic, listen to live music on the iconic bandstand or enjoy a lunchtime stroll. With many of us staying at home this year, we would love to give you the chance to create your own piece of history, by designing a postcard of the Pump Room Gardens depicting what this very special open space in the heart of your home town means to you.

A winning entry will be selected by our team of judges from each of five different categories. These designs will then be printed on a new set of special commemorative 2020 postcards for distribution through our visitor centres to people from all over the UK and the wider world.

The categories are age 7-11, age 12-17, age 18-25, age 26+, Community Groups and Primary Schools, and our panel of judges are:

- Archie Pitts – Friends of PRG
- Garima Dhawan – local artist
- Ash Palmisciano – local actor
- Warwickshire Youth Council representatives
- Warwick University's Photography Society

For information on how to enter, including terms and conditions, and to find out more about our panel of judges, visit: www.warwickdc.gov.uk/PRGPostcards

Postcard templates and application forms for design entries (e.g. drawing, painting, collage) are available to collect from the Royal Pump Rooms' information desk. Please note, photographic entries must be uploaded using the online application form, on the above website.

We strongly encourage entries from all communities in the district. We believe the 'village green' is a space for all to enjoy, and would like the 2020 postcards to reflect this.

Closing date 31st October 2020



Connecting with nature

Sadly, we couldn't go ahead with Ecofest in the Pump Room Gardens this year, due to Covid-19. So instead we thought we'd share some creative ideas to help you stay connected to nature this autumn. After all, the more we connect, the more we care.

Watch a sunset/sunrise: there are lots of good spots across the district to soak up a sunrise or sunset. Take a flask of your favourite drink and settle down for one of the greatest shows on earth!

Nature photography: most of us have a decent camera in our pocket all of the time, so why not use it to see things a little differently? Next time you're out walking, make a conscious effort to stop and take notice for a while. Capture something you wouldn't normally, or

create a list of things to find, treasure hunt style e.g. a colourful leaf, an insect, an interesting texture...

Forest bathing: known in Japan as Shinrin Yoku, forest bathing encourages you to walk or stand quietly beneath the trees, observing your surroundings and focusing on your breathing. A soothing way to connect with nature, with lots of health benefits.

Brave being barefoot: if you can, kick off your shoes and socks and feel the ground beneath you. Some of our parks are perfect for a short barefoot walk on grass, and it's also proven to help with balance and pain relief. Just take it slowly, and watch each step to prevent treading on something unpleasant!

Nature writing: sitting in one of your favourite green spaces with a notepad and pen can help you to see new things: even just writing a page of words in response to your surroundings can reveal things you haven't noticed before.



What to look out for in September

As we start to notice the first signs of autumn and temperatures start to lower, look out for seed heads and fruit ripening – a perfect time to go blackberry picking.

It seems we've all paid a little more attention to local wildlife during lockdown, so why not continue to encourage nature on your doorstep? You could leave seed heads on plants, such as sunflowers, and help provide food and shelter for birds during the cold months by letting things to die naturally.

You may still spot some late summer butterflies in our parks or your garden: Red Admirals and Tortoiseshells will be busy feeding up for their hibernation through the cold winter period, or to fuel up for their migration south.



Journeys South

Lots of us have appreciated the beauty and calm that comes from morning birdsong over the past few months, but some of our summer visitors have now left and are migrating south for warmer weather. You'll also notice that those birds who stay with us will be quieter now as there's no longer a need to fight over territories. Let's take a closer look at two of our favourite regular visitors.

Common Swift:

Swifts arrive in the UK late April/early May and migrate in July or early August, when insects become fewer for them to feed on. Swifts are opportunistic feeders and often feed on swarms of insects, collecting them at the back of their throat in a special pouch to bind with saliva to form a ball (sometimes with thousands of insects in!). Their journey takes them through France and Spain, all the way to the south of the Sahara, following the rains to collect as many insects as they can.



Common Cuckoo:

Young cuckoos have one of the biggest challenges, as the adult cuckoos migrate in early summer, leaving the young to fend for themselves and unable to leave until they are fully fledged. Yet somehow these new-borns are able to find their way from the UK, all the way to the forests of the Congo. The majority of the cuckoo's journey is made by night, often flying nonstop for 50-60 hours!



Heritage Open Days 11 to 20 September

One of the very few events still taking place this year is Warwick district's annual Heritage Open Days, which is part of England's biggest and best heritage festival.

Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 this year's event is smaller than usual, however there are still opportunities to visit buildings, gardens and places of historic interest not normally open to the public, free of charge.

Sites which will be allowing public access include Foundry Wood and St Mary's Allotments in Leamington, Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden and Hill Close Gardens in Warwick and Bagot's Castle. For those of you unable to get out and about the Leamington Society are inviting you to take a virtual walk through Jephson Gardens looking at special trees on the way.

You can pick up a copy of the Heritage Open Days booklet at the Warwick and Leamington Visitor Information centres or visit www.heritageopendays.org.uk for further information.



A day in the life of

Simon Richardson, Green Space Development Officer

How did you get into this line of work?

I started off as an engineering apprentice, designing machines, but I was made redundant. So I then decided to start on a Horticultural training scheme at college and was self-employed for three years before joining Bexley Council in London.

How long have you been working here?

I started at Warwick District Council in 2003, so almost 17 years!

What do you enjoy most about your work?

Every day is different and you can never predict what new challenges lie ahead. I enjoy being out in the fresh air and trying to encourage more people to see what is outside their front door rather than getting in their cars and travelling for miles. We have fantastic parks in our district and I don't think all of them are appreciated enough and often people don't realise the hard work needed to maintain them.

What do you do with your free time?

I enjoy watching sports and I am interested in history. I like going for walks locally and around the country and exploring different cities and parks. I also like travelling to different countries and experiencing their cultures (though not this year).

What key skills do you need to succeed at your job?

You need to be flexible and have the ability to communicate well with a variety of people and help where possible.

What would you be doing if you had chosen a different career path?

I would have liked to be an airline pilot, however I'm quite glad not to be in the airline industry at the current time.

What do you think will be the greatest challenges in your industry/ job over the next few years?

Climate change will have a big impact how we do things in the future and some of the traditional ways will have to change. Also at the moment we don't know what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have on Council's budgets for the upkeep and improvement of our open spaces.



Who was your childhood hero?

My childhood hero was Gary Lineker, Leicester legend!

Which is your favourite green space in the district?

My favourite park is St Nicholas Park, it has everything you would want for a family day out with the backdrop of the Castle.

What are you working on at the moment?

I am working on the new Grounds Maintenance Contract, new bowling greens for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and new playground for Victoria Park and a number of other smaller projects.

If you had a choice between being invisible or flying, which would you choose?

Definitely flying as you would see more of the world in a shorter space of time.

How would you spend your ideal date/ Sunday afternoon?

Watching Leicester City with a beer, even though my wife wouldn't agree!

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www.warwickdc.gov.uk/gsnews

For more information about green spaces in Warwick District please visit:

 greenspaces@warwickdc.gov.uk

 www.warwickdc.gov.uk/parks

 [WarwickDCNews](https://www.facebook.com/WarwickDCNews)

 [@Warwick_DC](https://twitter.com/Warwick_DC)

Joke of the Month

What did the big flower say to the small flower?

What's up bud!



www.warwickdc.gov.uk