



The Friends of St George's Gardens



Corporate Membership

2007

Why St George's Gardens matter

Almost three hundred years old, St George's Gardens are one of the first graveyards built in open country away from the churches they served. They contain the tomb of Oliver Cromwell's grand-daughter, Anna Gibson. Zachary Macaulay, father of Thomas and a passionate anti-slaver, is buried here. Among many thousands in unmarked graves are Jacobite rebels and royal servants. The Gardens are also a reminder of the dark history of body-snatching – the first recorded case took place here. The design of the Garden walls is believed to be by Nicholas Hawksmoor. The Gardens are recognised by English Heritage as being of special architectural importance. City of London guides take walking parties through the Gardens, showing visitors one of 'London's hidden secrets'.

Above all, though, St George's Gardens are a precious local amenity. They are used every week by hundreds of people living or working in the area. People walk through or stop to read their newspapers, watch birds and squirrels, breathe in the smell of grass and flowers, and relax. Few places in this part of central London give people such quietness and peace.

Improving the Gardens

Camden Council can maintain them but anything more depends on the commitment of the local community. For several years a dozen local organisations and businesses have helped the Gardens as Corporate Supporters. They have recognised that employees value the Gardens as a peaceful place to eat lunchtime sandwiches or to talk to friends after work. Their subscriptions have allowed the Friends to organise a range of free community events – helping the Gardens become better known by creating new reasons to use them.

These events will continue. But the Friends now have a bigger project - to build a sensory garden at the north west corner of the Gardens. St George's Gardens are close to the headquarters of the Royal National Institute of the Blind and across the road from a London University speech therapy and rehabilitation centre. A sensory garden would bring new groups of users into the Gardens.



The plan shows the Gardens stretching from Handel Street at the west to Sidmouth Street on the north side and Heathcote Street at the south east corner. The untidy corner at the south west end was originally the site of a greenhouse, now demolished. This is where the sensory garden will be.

The Friends have been planning the sensory garden project for more than two years and have raised £9000 towards the cost. The church authorities and Camden Council have both agreed to the designs. The first step is to level the site and clear the hardcore and concrete from the demolished greenhouse. Work is starting this autumn with volunteer labour.

An experienced group

The Friends of St George's Gardens are an experienced community group. We were formed in 1994 to campaign for restoration of the by then very run down Gardens. In 1997 the Gardens were one of a group of Camden's historic parks to receive heritage lottery funding under the new Urban Parks Programme. The restored Gardens reopened in Spring 2001. Since then, the Friends have not only worked to make the Gardens better known and better used. In 2004 we raised £15000 to restore the railings around the first tomb to be erected in the Gardens.

The Friends work closely and positively with Camden's Parks and Open Spaces Department. As regular users of the Gardens the Friends can see what is going well and what is less successful and can give the maintenance staff and Camden constant feedback. We are the eyes, ears and voice of the garden.

Most of the Friends of St George's Gardens live locally and use the Gardens regularly. A small committee meets every month (usually on the first Thursday of the month, at 7pm, in the Chapel of Rest). There is an AGM once a year (normally in the Community Centre in January or February) when local people can question the committee and comment on how the Gardens are being run. The committee keep in touch with members by post, newsletters and email. Our regularly updated website is at www.friendsofstgeorgesgardens.org.uk.

How local businesses can help

Corporate membership is £200 per year. You can send a cheque made out to the Friends of St George's Gardens, c/o the Marchmont Street Community Centre, London WC1N 1AB.

If you are interested in becoming a Corporate Member or supporting the sensory garden project in other ways such as buying a seat or paving stone please contact us at info@friendsofsaintgeorgesgardens.org.uk. We will be happy to provide further information about sponsorship opportunities and about the Gardens.

Corporate Members and organisations and businesses making donations in other forms will be acknowledged in newsletters, publicity material for Friends events including the St George's Day Party and on the Friends website.

Thank you for reading this flier. We hope you will become a Corporate Supporter and encourage our efforts to improve St George's Gardens for everyone who currently enjoys them, as well as future users.



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