

Vine Gardens



The floral display colour scheme for 2018 is red in commemoration of the centenary of the end of WW1. Sevenoaks is committed to marking the anniversary and is taking part in the national scheme 'Ribbon of Poppies'. The thousands of poppies which adorn the gardens have been knitted by residents young and old. Children have painted 226 'poppy' stones to mark the number of fallen listed on the War Memorial.

The Sopwith Camel is a bespoke Sculpture by Dominic Parrette of Sussex Willow. Dom is committed to the sustainable use of local woodlands, producing beautiful, functional products using traditional techniques. Sevenoaks Round Table has generously donated towards the creation of the willow bi-plane.



And 'Tommy' is seated at the Vine Café looking towards the War Memorial.

Over the recent years Sevenoaks Town Council has put in place a programme of improvements to the Vine and has achieved Green Flag status in 2016. To date the following improvements have been made:-

- Refurbishment of Band Stand
The bandstand is a focal point at the Vine Gardens and used regularly in the Summer to host bands playing a variety of music free for the public to enjoy on Sunday afternoons and Thursday evenings. Grant funding was received to help refurbish the bandstand with works completed in Summer 2014.



- Refurbishment of Band Practice Room to create Café of the Vine.

The Band Practice Room had been used for many years for storage. After a public questionnaire had been sent out to residents asking what they would like to see in the Town in next 10-20 years it was decided to turn the building into a community Café. After extensive work and grant funding the new café was brought to life. A grand opening took place on 26th September 2015.



- Refurbishment of Vine public toilets
It was decided that the Vine public toilets were in need of refurbishment in late 2015. Work began to install new flooring, equipment and signage. There is now a unisex toilet and a full accessible disabled toilet for public use.
- Installation of new piece of play equipment.
New children's play equipment was installed at the Vine Gardens in 2015. Small items of wooden equipment were chosen due to the site being in a conservation area.



- Provision of a Premises Licence enabling regular public events including Food Fairs.
- Appointed architects to produce plans and obtain planning permission for a disabled ramp for the Vine Pavilion.
- This year has seen the re-siting of a traditional red telephone box which has been decommissioned by BT to house a defibrillator for public use.



In 2017 the area held three Food & Drink Festivals which were so successful that further events have been booked for 2018.



All of these improvements have transformed the Vine Gardens and surrounding areas into a green community hub in a central location to the town. Key events are now held here including the French and Italian Markets and a Christmas Market. During the school summer holidays family fun days are held at several of the Town Council's open spaces, including The Vine.

For the first time this year a Charity Fair was held in the gardens following the annual Armed Forces Day Service.



The following additional improvements Have also taken place over 18 months:-

- Exterior refurbishment of Vine Pavilion
- Exterior refurbishment of Tea Kiosk
- New Bridge over the fish pond

New signage has been installed to give the public more information when visiting the gardens. The introduction of wi-fi in the gardens has proved very popular and people can often be seen relaxing on the numerous benches.

All horticultural work on the Vine Gardens is undertaken by Sevenoaks Town Council direct staff. Since 2017 a large replanting and renovation of the bedding has taken place using sustainable methods.



A new rhododendron bed was also sponsored by a local nursery Reuthers. Each year we have a colour theme to ensure that we try different displays and plant combinations. Plants are sourced from a nursery using low peat or zero peat. All Spring bulbs are re-used being dried, then planted again in beds and borders.

Bird and bug boxes have been introduced into the gardens over the years and are being used as can be seen below:



A regular volunteer helps on Sundays to clear litter from the gardens. There was a volunteer clear up day held on 27 June, including members of Soroptimist International, who helped with the weeding and tidying the gardens. From the helpers this year, it is hoped to form a volunteer group to meet on a regular basis

Early in 2017 the Littlevine Nursery & Pre-School operates from the Vine Pavilion requested a small plot of land to encourage its very young members to be involved in gardening. The Town Council was happy to agree to this and they are participating again this year.

Funding:

Where possible Sevenoaks Town Council will seek external funding for its projects thereby reducing the financial burden on the local taxpayer. The following grants have been received in relation to the Vine Gardens projects:-

1. CETB	£50,000	Rebuild of Café
2. Awards for all	£10,000	Café white goods
3. KCC	£750.00	Café crockery
4. ICET	£10,500	Play equipment
5. KCC	£10,000	Refurbishment of public toilets
6. ICET	£9,000	Refurbishment of Bandstand
7. KCC	£7,000	Refurbishment of bridge over the pond
Total	£97,250.00	

Wherever possible sponsorship is also sought for events. For example Humberts Estate Agent sponsors Live on the Vine music event for young people held in July each year.

The Café on the Vine is a community café operated by the Town Council and profits are invested back into the Vine Gardens and surrounding areas.

Cricket is regularly played on The Vine which is hugely popular with the local community.

In October Sevenoaks remembered 'The Great Storm' of 1987 when six of the seven oaks were felled in the high winds. A plaque was installed by the Mayor of Sevenoaks marking the 30 year anniversary of the storm. The remaining oak original oak is in good health, as well as the replacement oaks planted. A tree survey was carried out in 2016 by a professionally recognised arborial company.



The 'King' Oak

