

Report by Lizzy Mansfield for The Barbara and Philip Denny Trust

3rd Report Covering October 2017 – January 2018

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It has been a really interesting few months heading through autumn and now well into winter. Luckily there has been plenty to keep us busy and warm over the last few months with much work carried out throughout the whole garden site. We have been continuing to keep the garden looking tidy by leaf sweeping (a seemingly never ending job with so many trees around us but very satisfying), hedge cutting - an important task to carry out before the birds start to nest, and pruning shrubs such as roses to ensure their good health and that they put on a good display of growth and flowers in the year to come. The pruning of some of the plants has also come in handy in providing us with materials for making Christmas decorations that were put up throughout the Palace.

There has been an element of putting the garden to bed over the winter that is tinged with a little sadness particularly taking up some of my beloved brassicas that will not be overwintering! However, even these plants will be contributing to new life in the garden next year by making wonderful compost to mulch the vegetable beds with. Therefore, we spent time clearing away any plants in the vegetable garden that were at the end of their lives ensuring that the beds were kept tidy and free from leaves and weeds, this helps to keep the vegetable garden looking attractive and assists with our preparations for spring. The beds will then either contain any plants that are to be overwintered or they have been or will be mulched which will improve the soil structure, suppress weeds and help retain soil moisture. In addition with an eye on new life in spring we have planted bulbs (*Narcissus* and *Tulipa*) for cut flowers and sown broad beans which are sown early in order to obtain an earlier harvest in May.

In a similar vein of preparing for spring we have been planting bulbs in the meadow in the walled garden, in some of our tree circles and also along some of the borders to increase population of bulbs in the coming spring, it has been filling me with excitement to see the beginnings of them growing at the moment, finding small signs that the days are getting longer and spring isn't too far away. At the beginning of autumn we also scarified and then sowed Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) in the meadow and the moat at the front of the palace, yellow rattle is a hemi-parasitic plant that gains some of its nutrients from neighbouring plants in particular grass and therefore helps to reduce the vigour of the grass in the meadow and therefore allows other meadow plants to thrive.

As part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Project at the Palace a Tudor Dovecote Archaeological dig was carried out at the front of the palace in the paddock, this gave us an opportunity to carry out some lawn work which is an invaluable skill as an apprentice as most gardens have some element of grass. We were able to use a turf cutting machine (another excellent opportunity) to remove the turf in the paddock where the dig was to take place and then make use of it by re-laying the turf in the lawn area in front of the walled garden Tudor gate that had become rather worn. Other elements of the project have also started such as the tree work throughout the garden and it has been fascinating and a great learning experience to see the hard work Lucy has put in to co-ordinate such an important element and working with contractors and also ensuring that the public are aware of what is going on and why.

I have been continuing my Level 3 studies at college which remain very interesting and thought provoking particularly in providing a good scientific basis for works that we as gardeners carry out on a day to day basis. I have my first set of exams at the beginning of February so I am very much in revision mode already. In October I passed my PA1 and PA6 course; these are pesticide application

courses and although we limit our use of pesticides at Fulham Palace it is a very important course to obtain in order to further my career.

Overall these past few months have been a very busy and exciting time in the garden and have given me wonderful opportunities that I would not receive elsewhere. I am eager with anticipation of the continuing project work such as the apple arch tree planting and the works to the borders outside the walled garden. Each day brings a new sign of the coming of spring and more improvements that we can help bring to the gardens.

Thank you for your support.

Lizzy Mansfield.