Denny Trust Report – 1st August 2018 Lizzy

This is sadly my last report to you and it has been a fantastic year and a half being an apprentice at Fulham Palace. Since my last report in April there has as usual been a huge amount of work to do, most of it feels like it has been in the vegetable garden.

It has been really interesting to be at Fulham Palace for the same spring/summer period as I have had the chance to repeat a number of tasks and learn lessons from the previous year and hopefully improve on them. We have perhaps been more strategic sowing seeds this year – doing it in successions so that we have plants throughout the year both to sell on our barrow and also to use as replacements in the garden as the current plants go over.

This year I have reached equal heights of obsession, except this year it is with potatoes, root vegetables, courgettes and squashes!! The spreadsheet of tasks has been back in action again although as mentioned on our tour it was a bit scuppered by my furry squirrel friends who seemed to want me to replant my squash bed a few times. This year along with other improvements such as the apple arch in the walled garden we have been extending many of the vegetable beds so that we can increase the production space for the fruit, vegetables and cut flowers.

The extension of the beds gave us an excellent opportunity to gain more skills with the use of a turf cutter and a rotavator to change the strips of lawn into new beds for produce. We have also continued to gain further experience on the other machinery such as strimmers which will be extremely useful in our future careers. As part of that in spring and the beginning of summer we were carrying out a lot of mowing, however, the heatwave has put a stop to mowing and replaced it with watering which at present seems to fill up large portions of the day although it is worth it when we see all the plants continue to grow.

Lucy has continued to give us specialist training such as how to train restricted forms of fruit trees such as espaliers and fan trained forms. We are incredibly lucky to have such a good number of them so that we may practice our skills. We have also continued to tend the newly planted fruit trees along the apple arch especially as this weather has placed them under a lot of stress for newly planted trees.

Following our successful expanded volunteer day in winter we had another corporate volunteer day in July. It was such a fun day even though we were tackling nettles, brambles and weeds! Our corporate volunteers worked really hard in the warm temperatures and we achieved so much in one day that as you saw on our tour we now have a view from the back of the walled garden into the graveyard of All Saints Church getting back a good sense of the relationship between Fulham Palace and the church. It makes me really excited about all the changes that are to come and being able to reclaim areas of the garden, bringing them back into use and hopefully in this case a real refuge for wildlife.

As part of the corporate day we gave a tour of the walled garden to the volunteers and we have continued to make the garden ready and provide tours for various functions in the palace. These have included the Chairman’s Garden Party and the Volunteer Party – a chance for the staff of the palace to show their appreciation for all the hard work that the volunteers do for the Palace and in particular in the garden we could not do all the fantastic projects that we have without their help.

All my college work is now over, I passed both the exams I took in February with Commendation which is a great relief. I took the final two exams in June and have my fingers crossed until the end of August when I get my final results.

Finally I want to say a massive thank you to the Trust and you the Trustees for giving me the opportunity to do the apprenticeship at Fulham Palace. It has been such a wonderful and informative experience that has set me up for the next stage of my career at Cambridge University Botanic Garden. If you are ever in Cambridge it would be lovely to see you and show you around the gardens. Thank you again.