



Queenswood Heritage Gateway Project

Project Officer Rose Farrington looks back on this successful project to research Queenswood's history and bring it alive for today's visitors.

The Queenswood Heritage Gateway project has been running throughout 2018/19 and is now nearing its end. The project is currently being evaluated but from my perspective it has been a great success.

Over fifty new and existing volunteers have been engaged in various aspects of the project, from archive research to making benches, from building fences to oral history interviewing. The project would not have been so successful without them and I couldn't have hoped for a more committed, doggedly determined and enthusiastic group of volunteers to work with. So, a big thank you to them.

There were several ambitious strands to the project, each of which has contributed to the improved visitor experience at Queenswood. The highest profile of which was the development of the First World War Commemorative Woodland which, I hope, is somewhere that regular visitors to Queenswood and the wider Herefordshire community can be proud of. The First World War woodland sits at the heart of the Arboretum, enclosed in a beautifully crafted chestnut fence. Within is a winding path that leads through three concentric circles of young red oak (*Quercus rubra*), at the centre is an English oak (*Quercus robur*) stump, left tall with a memorial plaque on top. Seating, created using oak felled within the woodland space, encircles this central stump and allows visitors to linger and contemplate in this quiet corner of the woods. The woodland and artwork have evoked much consideration and feeling, ultimately and most importantly the woodland allows a shared space for a personal act; that of remembrance.

After many years of little investment, the project saw the much-needed installation and upgrade of on-site interpretation and signage. Within the Visitor Centre, there is now a Wildlife Watching monitor, displaying live footage from nearby nature reserve Bodenham Lake, from which we hope future visitors will have the opportunity to view live footage of nesting Osprey.

Thousands of visitors have already tried out the new Lyrics, Leaves and Lives audio trail that runs throughout the Arboretum. The volunteers and I spoke to many individuals and recorded hours of heartfelt memories for the trail which was launched ahead of the Easter holidays and has been a great success. Along with personal memories users of the trail will find historical information, poetry (recorded in partnership with Ledbury Poetry Festival), bird song and a children's trail.

My time at Queenswood is nearly up but I know that the legacy of the project will continue, the audio trail will be here for years to come, the First World War woodland will continue to grow and change, and primary school children will be able to visit with the help of a seasonal teacher-led educational pack full of activities to help them explore and learn about the fascinating history of the country park. Furthermore, the newly published booklet 'Queenswood: Our Wood on the Hill' which explores the long history of the woods and is full of archive documents, images, and personal memories is now available in the Queenswood Shop.

When I began this role, I didn't know how special Queenswood was to so many people, it's been an absolute privilege to meet some of those individuals and share the history of this precious woodland.

The Queenswood Heritage Gateway project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and received grants and donations from several other sources.

Rose Farrington, Queenswood Heritage Gateway Project Officer, 2019



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

