Penrith's Coronation Garden now completed

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The ceremony will be carried out by Councillor John Thompson, Chair of Eden District Council, and Catriona Lang, the granddaughter of the late Alderman J. Simpson Yeates, who was the Chair of the then Penrith Urban Council at the time of the Coronation of King George VIth in May 1937. In commemoration of the Coronation the laying out of the garden was defrayed by the generous gift of Alderman Simpson Yeates and was opened on 20 April 1938.

Over time the garden fell into disrepair and was rarely visited by the public. In order to commemorate the centenary of the Rotary movement throughout the world, Penrith Rotary Club undertook to rejuvenate the garden. Their aim was to make the garden a place which raises the public's awareness, understanding and appreciation of the history where they live, and to provide a tourist attraction within the town.

In December 2011 the project was awarded a grant of almost £170,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to pursue the garden's regeneration. Eden District Council provided £10,000 towards the project and the Council's Architect, Paul Brunsdon, helped to oversee the Coronation Garden's redevelopment

Mr Jeff Fawcett, the project coordinator on behalf of Penrith Rotary Club, said: “We are delighted with the outcome of this project. We believe the new garden will be a considerable asset to the town and will be enjoyed by all age groups to learn and gain an understanding of their local heritage. The initial feedback from the community has been so very positive and makes all the effort so worthwhile.”

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “This is an extremely exciting project that was driven by a real need to restore this historic garden and return it to a well-used community space. Through an extensive range of activities and volunteer opportunities, local people are now able to enjoy and learn about the Coronation Garden and we are delighted to have given the Penrith Rotary Club our full support.”

Eden District Council's Chairman, John Thompson, said: “I am delighted to be opening this garden with Catriona Lang, the granddaughter of the late Alderman J. Simpson Yeates. The project has rejuvenated this community green space for generations to come. We have been proud to help Penrith Rotary Club with this project with £10,000 of funding and the services of our architect, Paul Brunsdon.”

Rory Stewart, MP for Penrith and the Border, said: “Many congratulations to Penrith's Rotary Club for completing this wonderful project with such commitment and dedication. Community green spaces are so important to us all, and I am thrilled that we will all now be able to enjoy the Coronation Garden for many years to come.”

Notes to editors

- The Coronation Garden, which is only some 40 x 30 metres in size, is situated in Portland Place, Penrith, and originally formed a tennis court and gardens to two houses which were converted to become the Town Hall in 1905/06.
- The project has included restoring the very artistic iron gates, replacing the iron railings removed in 1939 in support of the war effort, and converting the garden to one of a sensory nature. The layout of the central paths in the original garden has been retained and they incorporate the shape of St. Andrew's Cross, on which the town's

coat of arms was based in recognition of Penrith's historical close links to Scotland.

- The main circular path has been used to create a timeline of Penrith. Set into the path floor are fourteen plaques each indicating a period of history from prehistoric to modern times. Within each of the time frame periods there is an information panel providing illustrations and information on that period of history.
- At each end of the St. Andrew's cross pathways there is an artwork sculpture designed by one of the local infant/junior schools working with local artist, Karen MacDougall. The town seal sculpture was designed by pupils at St. Catherine's School; the Penrith Castle by North Lakes School; the Beacon sculpture by Beaconside School; and the market town sculpture by Hunter Hall School.
- Some 800 people from the schools and other community groups were involved with Karen MacDougall in the design of the sculptures and eight colourful historical banners which are displayed on flagpoles in the frontage to the garden. The Neolithic period banner was designed by Beaconside School pupils; the Romans by Penrith Scouts; the early medieval banner by the 1st Eden Guides; Cumbria Connexions designed a banner concentrating on writings and windows; the Jacobite period by the Bridge Cafe Group; Victorian Penrith was designed by Brunswick Road Primary School; World War II by the Penrith Methodist Church senior citizens' luncheon club; and finally, a people's banner consisting of self-portraits by people visiting Penrith Library.
- Activity packs have been prepared for use by schools when visiting the garden, and others are available for use by families from the Penrith Tourist Information Centre.

Further information

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