

## GARDEN NEWS

## REFLECTIONS ON THE INNER TEMPLE GARDEN

BY MASTER SELLS



It was in 2006 that I was asked to become involved in the management of the gardens in the Inn. The Head Gardener was then approaching retirement. I began at once the process of finding a successor: advertisements were placed, lists compiled and interviews arranged. I was joined by Nick Paladina, the Collector, and by Bob Sweet from the Royal Horticultural Society. We had set aside two days but in the event only one was needed...in the afternoon we interviewed a candidate who was clearly the choice for us! Meticulously prepared, focused and full of ideas Andrea was the natural choice. And so began a most happy and fruitful decade of collaboration in the gardens.

We have worked to a plan which we had prepared and as I now look back after a decade

in charge nearly all the works have been completed: it is not necessary to recite them all, they are, I hope, evident to the eye: new paths, steps, gates, offices, workshops and extensive new planting schemes. Only the borehole is yet to be drilled and we have a date for that in the New Year!

My aim has been twofold, to create a quiet haven of horticultural excellence, open to all as much as possible, and to stage events which both enhance the garden and introduce it to a wider public. There have been each year many public events. For me the highlights have been the joint garden show with the RHS, the open weekends, the Chelsea Fringe and the artistic days.

We have a formidable team of gardeners, training apprentices and have a well-established band of volunteers. But above all, it is the creative skill of the Head Gardener which has made the greatest impression; the scale and the scope of the planting has been monumental, exciting and innovative. The garden has received plaudits from many quarters and it has become well known through the horticultural world. It has been a pleasure for me to meet and welcome so many visitors from gardens all over the world.

There have been losses too; a fine *Magnolia* and a venerable *Catalpa*: the latter is about to be replaced by my gift to the garden, a disease resistant elm called *Zelkova serrata* 'Green Vase'. It will be planted before Christmas and I hope to oversee its progress from my chambers at 5 Paper Buildings (my professional home for over 40 years).

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to hold the post of Master of the Garden for so long and I can only hope that my successor gains as much from the post as I have.

