

A not so *secret* treat

With birdsong in the trees and a friendly robin hopping around your feet, it's hard to believe The Secret Garden Tea Rooms is in the heart of Chelmsford.

It's easy to see why a regular customer suggested the name The Secret Garden several years ago, when the tea rooms became a self-contained business.

Prior to that it was a rather eccentric and organically growing venue that started in a portakabin and then literally took over the house of owner Sheila Hinton, first using her kitchen, then the living room, followed by the dining room. In the end, such was the popularity of the tea rooms that Sheila bowed to the inevitable and moved home, leaving her house and gardens to become the thriving, welcoming tea rooms it is today.

Nowadays there is ample seating indoors where eclectic furnishings create a unique and cosy setting, and out in the charmingly quirky garden rugs and cushions are available for added comfort.

All the delicious cakes and other baked goods, such as sausage rolls, are made on the premises, with fresh bread, fish and meats all sourced from local suppliers. Manager Jane Wickes says 'We sell out of our cream teas every day. For something more savoury our Auntie Margaret's Cheese Scones are extremely popular.'

Starting with serving full English breakfasts, mid



morning snacks, lunch including homemade soups, lasagnes and vegetarian dishes, and finally afternoon tea, means the 21-strong team of waiting and kitchen staff is kept busy throughout the day. The Secret Garden is also fully licensed – many customers regularly take the ten-minute stroll from the town centre in order to sit in the secluded garden and enjoy a glass of wine or beer with their meals.

Jane says 'In addition to the tea rooms, our purpose-built function room is very popular for private parties, whether a business breakfast meeting, an afternoon tea party or an evening event.'



The Secret Garden
7 Writtle Road, Chelmsford
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www.secretgardentearooms.co.uk
Open Monday – Saturday 9am-
4.30pm, Sunday 10am-4pm
Ample parking