

Cookham and Cookham Dean Horticultural Society

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 25th January 7.30pm

Cookham Dean Village Hall

THE POTAGER GARDEN

An illustrated talk by Brian Fisher

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

As I sit writing this letter on Thursday 5 January, there is a gale blowing outside and the garden is littered with debris from the trees and bushes. At least it's better than last year, when we had snow and ice to contend with at this time, and we need a lot of rain to make up for the dry autumn we've just had. I'm hoping things will calm down in a couple of days as I'm so behind with many of the jobs that need doing outside and I really do need to catch up. I still have bulbs to plant and some of last year's pots to empty, but in my defence I have to say that since we came back from a



Cornus alba Sibirica in the Savill Garden

holiday in India in mid-November, we have both suffered from a really awful cough which has made us feel as though we're having a prolonged bout of 'flu without the temperature. However, I'm a great believer in letting Nature catch up with itself so hopefully by the time spring comes the garden will be almost back to normal.

India was an amazing experience, and the gardens in the palaces we visited were so interesting in that many of them were laid out like early English parterres, with some similar plants and splendid flowers, and the bright sun showing off the wonderful colours. The lovely frangipani was much in evidence, with its glorious perfume, and obviously there was an endless supply of labour to do all the hard work. Outside the palaces there was quite a different picture, and it never ceased to puzzle us how the thousands of animals we saw wandering around everywhere, cows, buffalo, pigs, goats, monkeys and dogs, managed to find enough to eat in that arid terrain.

I think you'll all agree that our last meeting in 2011 was a really enjoyable evening. After the short AGM we were treated to a demonstration of a Christmas arrangement by Sherry Smith, who produced a beautiful display of foliage which all came from her garden. She was kind enough to donate this to the raffle, and the lucky winner was Maureen Reid who I'm sure will have much enjoyed having it in her house over Christmas. Mary Downes and Becky Pinniger produced another excellent quiz* and the committee is most grateful to everyone who gave something for the raffle – the result was that we raised £135 for Braywick Heath Nurseries and filled 19 hampers for the lucky winners.. As well as coffee, there was wine and mince pies, and with the number of guests who joined us the hall was almost full and I like to think that everyone had a very good time. I hope some of those guests will decide to become members in 2012.

The New Year starts with a talk by an old friend, Brian Fisher, so we know we are in for a good evening. Many thanks again to Mary Downes and Pam Campin for their efforts in planning such a good programme for another year, we have quite a few highlights in the pipeline, as well as our usual Spring Show and the Cookham Dean Horticultural Show in September – more of that later in the year. This year's programme is printed later in the newsletter, and I would draw your attention to the two visits planned, in June and July, the first to the Cutting Garden in Little Stoke, near Wallingford, on 27 June, and the second to Overstroud Cottage at Great Missenden. It is assumed that members will go by car to each of these venues, but if

anyone in the Society would like to take on the job of organising a coach outing to somewhere of interest, we'd be very pleased to hear from you.

We shall shortly be producing the schedule for this year's Summer Show at the Cookham Dean Fete, the committee has made a few amendments since last year and we hope even more members will feel inspired this time to enter at least one class.

As Chairman of the Society for another year, I would like to end this letter by thanking all the committee for their help and support, everyone plays a very active part and I hope they enjoy their participation. Although she is not on the Committee, one of the main reasons for the Society's success is the excellent newsletter produced by Gill Townend and we really appreciate the amount of work she puts into this. I hope she enjoys putting it together as much as we enjoy reading it.

As we start 2012, may I wish all our members a very Happy New Year.

Susie Tremlett.

*Joint winners were Charles and Marion Elly, with Kitty Hitchener, who scored 28 out of a possible 30 points. Adele Weiner and her team of 4 others also scored 28 points.

Planting at the Olympic Park

As I write this in December 2011, the two year planting programme at the Olympic Park has just been completed with 250 acres of new parklands being created from industrial land by the Olympic Delivery Authority. I was lucky enough to be included in an organised tour of the Olympic Park in November and although our tour was restricted to a relatively short official viewing route because of security we were bombarded with facts and figures which makes me impatient to visit next year when the park will be known as the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The original site was heavily contaminated with heavy metals and other nasty waste materials and a massive clean up and soil replacement has taken place, including the removal from the site of all traces of the dreaded Japanese knotweed.

The planting scheme was originally conceived by George Hargreaves, an American landscape architect who designed the 2000 Sydney Olympic site. The design was to be based on a series of botanical gardens with a chronological display of exotic plants introduced to Britain during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Although the master plan underpins the basic structure of the scheme, there was a feeling by British designers that it should be more naturalistic in style and Sarah Price was subsequently brought in along with the 'Sheffield School' designers, James Hitchmough and Nigel Dunnett, well known for their naturalistic planting design first championed by Piet Oudolf.

The team of Sheffield designers suggested a park design divided into sections relying heavily on perennials and annuals around the culverted River Lea. There are copses of trees and linear hedge systems but the real point of the design is all about 'pictorial meadows'

The Olympic Parkland contains 4000 semi - mature trees, over 300,000 wetland plants and more than ten football fields worth of annuals and perennial meadows designed to flower during the Games in July and August 2012.

The trees are between 4 and 7 metres high and were grown in Hampshire and include cherries, ash, hazel, white willow, crack willow, alder, aspen, holm oak, English oak, rowan lime, field maple, sweet gum and silver birch. Already a 2011 sowing of annuals provided a riot of colour through the summer and autumn months. A Riverside Garden stretches for half a mile between the Aquatics centre and the Olympic Stadium, featuring 120,000 plants from 250 species across the world, arranged by temperate regions. It is here that the plants have been laid out carefully so that the tallest plants don't shade out the lower ones in a layering effect "The effect will be like a pointillist painting" according to Price. The wetland plants have been grown in Norfolk and Wales (some of the plants had been grown on in coir mats sunk in waterbeds in Thetford) and over 30 species of native reeds, rushes, grasses, sedges and irises have also been sourced from the Gower peninsula in Wales. Around a third of this planting has been created from cuttings and seeds collected from the site before construction was started.

There will be spectator lawns, timber seating, frog ponds, loggeries, wetlands, woodlands and tree lined



footpaths. The boast is that people will never be more than a 50 metre walk from a seat. A riverside RHS Great British Garden features Bronze, Silver and Gold themed areas with running track inspired spiral paths

New habitats have been created for species including otter, kingfisher, grey heron and water vole. Some cosmos were still putting on a good performance even in the middle of November (see photo) The arrival of a wide variety of wildlife into this naturalistic setting, together with the cleaning up of the River Lea, makes this a welcome green space to be treasured in the future. GT

Creepy Crawlies



I had a summer of unusual (and interesting) creepy crawlies in my garden last year to go along with the usual snails, spiders and slugs. June saw an abundance of Mullein moth caterpillars on my Verbascum. Stunning male stag beetles crept out of my log piles later in the summer. Then in late August we had hummingbird hawkmoths on the Buddleia.

The last interesting bug was walking along a bedroom windowsill. I thought it was a strange elongated shield bug. Having used the powers of Google I discovered that it is in fact *Leptoglossus occidentalis* or a Western Conifer Seed Bug. They are common in USA where they can become a pest when they try to come indoors (in large numbers) to hibernate over the winter months. Their other common names are squashbug and stinkbug. Have you seen them too?

Chris Sibbald

Notes from a Cornish Garden.....

Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden, St Ives

Dame Barbara Hepworth lived in St Ives from 1949 until her death in 1975 at the age of 72. In her will she requested that there should be an exhibition of some of her works in Trewyn Studio and its garden. The studio, including furniture, books and papers, was damaged in the fire that caused Hepworth's death but the executors have reconstructed something of the feeling Trewyn Studio had in the 1950's and this and the garden are open to the public as a small museum. It has been administered by Tate St Ives since 1993.

The studio leads directly into the garden, which according to one source was laid out by Hepworth's friend, the composer Priaulx Rainier. Slowly it filled with the sculptures Hepworth created and when she began to work in bronze in 1956, she kept back an artist's cast of each new sculpture for the garden.

The garden has an intimate feel and judging from early photographs the trees and shrubs have since grown up to obscure the views of the town. There is a small greenhouse, ponds and distinct areas of shady planting and rock gardens. There are three large stone sculptures and 18 bronzes, including the small scale model for Meridian, the 15ft sculpture made for the courtyard of State House in High Holborn, an ugly 60's tower block (now thankfully demolished) where I worked in my first job. Sadly I walked past it every day in my early 20's without appreciating it. If you are in St Ives and have time, do visit this garden. GT



The Garden Centre Group

As reported in September's newsletter, the Garden Centre Group (better known as Wyevale and Blooms brands) is up for sale and the likely new owner seems to be the private equity firm of Terra Firma, led by Guy Hands. The deal is expected to fetch around £300 million. In a mad spending spree in 2006, HBOS bankrolled a takeover of the chain for £450million, of which £370 million was a loan from HBOS.

This new deal therefore represents a big loss for the group's owners because it is just one of hundreds of businesses that have fallen into the hands of Lloyds Banking Group since its disastrous decision to buy HBOS in 2008. Lloyds of course is now backed by the taxpayer so we are all losers. Look out for catchy headlines later this month....'Hands wants Green Fingers' and 'Hands on Gardening'

Improve your soil

At Hyde Hall, the RHS garden in Essex, the soil is heavy clay which gets wet and cold in winter and dries 'rock' hard in hot, dry summers. Many Cookham gardeners experience this problem so here is a suggestion. At Hyde Hall the gardeners apply a mix of 60% 6mm coarse grit and 40% sharp sand in a layer of 5-8cm deep (2-3 ins) over the soil. It is then dug in to a spade's depth. This helps to ensure free draining soil in the dry garden where the Mediterranean plants like their roots out of water. This is not an easy task but for small areas some of you may want to try this solution, particularly for plants and tubers which tend to rot off in the winter.

Managing your Flower Border

A useful guide to monthly jobs in the flower border is printed in this month's RHS magazine. For members who do not receive it, here it is for the first three months.....

JANUARY

*Clear perennial weeds and debris *Consider growing perennials from seed and choose new plants from catalogues; *Inspect tender perennials and tubers over-wintering indoors

FEBRUARY

*Cut back withered foliage from herbaceous plants and grasses

MARCH

*Mulch *Insert plant supports *Apply fertiliser * Protect shoots from slug damage *Deadhead early daffodils *Plant summer bulbs *Plant, divide or move perennials *Trim damaged evergreen foliage

Inspiration or Aspiration? - Programme News 2012

We are starting the New Year with some ideas for how to combine fruit and vegetables within our ornamental gardens, to make a potager. The knack of doing this in an attractive way has so far eluded me and I am looking forward to picking up a few tips from Brian Fisher (January 25th, which I note is Burns Night, so maybe we can grow the neeps and tatties for next year!)

On February 29th, Christine Brewster from "Stripey Baskets" at Englefield will be demonstrating the craft of willow weaving and perhaps this will encourage us to make some supports for the vegetables!

March brings the Spring Show. Are the green shoots of your Society daffodils making an appearance yet – mine aren't.) Later in the year we have talks on "Scent in the Garden" (Stephen Lacey), "Garden Photography" (David Manners) and in September, Ursula Buchan will ask "Why Garden?" Let's hope that by then we will have had a successful growing season or at least be aiming to learn from this year's mistakes.... (it can't only be me that makes them, can it?)

In June a Wednesday evening visit is planned to The Cutting Garden at Little Stoke, where Rachel Siegfried grows flowers and foliage for cutting. In July there will be a Tuesday afternoon trip to Overstroud Cottage in Great Missenden; this is an artistic chalk garden on two levels with a collection of 17th and 18th C. plants, a potager/herb garden and old fashioned roses. MD

Copy deadline for February newsletter is 6th February. There will be an update on the Eden Project which I visited at Christmas but I can't be the only one who has been to a public garden in the last three months?? More contributions please!! gilltownend@aol.com 01628 483092. **If you haven't renewed your membership please do so at the next meeting or send your cheque asap for £10 to Janet Shanks, 144 Whyteladies Lane, Cookham Rise, SL6 8LA together with the form in the last newsletter.**