



# NEWSLETTER

Issue 68

Autumn 2009



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## Letter from the Chair

Dear Members

Did you enjoy the summer? Apparently it was those few short weeks of sunshine we got during Wimbledon fortnight. Since then the weather has been changeable and it certainly doesn't help with forward planning.

As the school term ended we were thrown into our next big event, the Lambeth Country Show Flower Show. Over the weekend of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> we ran our usual show containing 84 classes. I always worry in case something goes wrong, and as the last exhibitor left on Sunday evening I was able to breathe a sigh of relief that everything had gone according to plan; well, nearly everything. It is really down to all our volunteers who make an effort to give some time, any time from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening. If these members didn't give their time like this there is no way that the show could go ahead. Everything has to happen so quickly and to time. There is no way I could even attempt to do it on my own. From our point of view there are many considerations, including the Hut sales, an opportunity to sell products normally stocked at the Hut to a much wider audience; our takings are much larger than we would normally take at the Trading Hut over a July weekend.

The Lambeth Country Show is an opportunity to recruit new members to the society; I remember the day I joined the LHS in 1974 at the first Lambeth Country Show, so you never know who might be attracted to join and what they might bring to us. We recruited 21 new members, so if you are one of those new members, welcome.

Then of course there is the Flower Show, which needs a large number of people to steward with judges, write out entry cards, take late entries, work out and distribute prize money, and steward the exhibits throughout the weekend to ensure their safety and be able to answer questions. We always find that unlike our own shows there are always a number of late entries, either because they were unaware that they needed to enter in advance, or because their entry form is sitting in a fax machine in a council office, not picked up.

The last group of volunteers are those that look after the other three, the 'kitchen staff' who keep everyone's spirits up by providing lunch and afternoon tea for our willing gang; as well as the man with a van who is crucial to getting everything there and back again. So it is thank you all once again for all your help.

We are looking for someone who can take on the organisation and running of the Lambeth Country Show Flower Show next year, subject to the Council wanting us to be involved. I would be happy to help and guide but it has come to that time when I need to hand this mantle on to someone else.

As I mentioned earlier, I joined the Society at the first Lambeth Country Show in 1974. I visited the show for a further two years and then offered to help at the Hut. After being given directions I ventured up to the Trading Hut. As I approached and nervously knocked on the green door I vividly remember being greeted by John Delamare.

On speaking to John it became apparent that he was one of the stalwarts of the Society. I then met Roy Green who at the time was the Show Secretary. He went on to become the Trading Secretary. It was such an important post as it fuelled the work of the Society. It was news that he had recently passed away that started me thinking and remembering all the good times he and his wife Eileen had whilst they were living in Lambeth. In our archives there are newspaper reports of shows which show his children as participants in the show. Roy loved flowering plants and in particular hanging baskets. He would offer to do demonstrations for our Bring and Buy events or at our talks. It was Roy who found the supplier of our bedding plants. After being let down by a supplier Roy trawled the South East until he found Dave at Barnes Nurseries and persuaded him to supply us, which he has done ever since. Eileen, Roy's wife, sent me some copies of photographs and you could immediately see his 'signature' written all over them with numerous hanging baskets. In one shot he is sitting in the pose that many of us remember seeing him in at the Hut, especially after unloading a bag or two from the delivery lorry - legs astride, hands on knees and roll-up in one hand. Whilst living in Norwood his breathing got harder and although it seems like yesterday, sixteen years ago he moved to Norfolk where he could enjoy not only his garden but his other passion – fishing. They made many new friends and were members of the Breatheasy Club, and whilst active were able to go on outings with them. He died just 9 days after his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday and many of us will have lots of fond memories of Roy that will

make us both laugh and cry. Our thoughts are with Eileen and the rest of the family. Many of you will have heard that Rhiannon Harlow-Smith, our Secretary, has been severely ill for the last few weeks. It was a great shock to all of us and we were very worried for a while. I won't go into detail here as I feel we should devote one of our monthly talks to Rhiannon's adventure. I'm sure she would tell her story with a horticultural slant. We're pleased to report that she is making a good steady recovery and we look forward to seeing her back at the rudder. We have certainly missed her, not only for all the work she does behind the scenes for the LHS but also for her good-natured, patient manner when attending the Hut or our monthly talks. When Dot Yates informed the committee that she wanted to stand down as our long-serving Treasurer, it was Rhiannon who cast the net far and wide! Well actually, two doors up from where she lived - and found Karina Reed. Karina took the helm and continued to steer us through some choppy waters, including a lease review and increase; business rate application; increases in insurance; and taking extra jobs whilst Rhiannon recovered. She has always been calm but measured, efficient but thoughtful, reliable and well organised. Karina indicated at the beginning of the year that she would like to stand down as Hon. Treasurer at the next AGM. Therefore we are now looking for someone who would like to take on the role of Treasurer. If you are interested please get in touch with Karina or myself to find out more. All the best  
Tony Pizzoferro

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## EDITORIAL

Whether you feel that we've had any summer or not, it is certain that we've had a busy time in the LHS!

Three of the four coach outings have been and gone, very successfully, and as usual Brendan has arranged the weather pretty well. Thanks are due to Brendan, who spends a lot of time and trouble with the programme of visits, and as we have seen, double-checks each one before we go! There is one more trip on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September, to Essex – to go on the waiting list, contact Brendan (see back page).

We also need to thank our Open Gardeners, who have not only dug, planted, swept and tidied, but also braved the comments of complete strangers (all positive, I'm sure), and supplied innumerable cups of tea and slices of cake – again, to the great enjoyment of all who visited. I have a sneaking suspicion that the garden owners enjoy it too!

We have one more garden to see this year – 24 Chestnut Road, SE27 9LF, on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2-5pm, owned by Paul Brewer and Anne Rogerson – don't miss it!

I would like to thank the doughty writers who contribute to this newsletter – it is good to hear other voices. If anyone would like to send in an article, snippet or comment, on a gardening-related topic, all will be considered.

The deadline for submissions to the Spring 2010 Newsletter is Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Don't forget to have a look at the website – [lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk) – for up-to-date information and useful links, Show Rules etc. Happy gardening!

*Val Hunn*

**THE INNER TEMPLE GARDENS, EC4, OPENING**  
**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 12.30 to 4pm. Admission £3, Children free**

This 3 acre garden, which lies between the Thames on the Embankment and Fleet Street, has sweeping lawns with many unusual trees and spectacular herbaceous borders, showing late flowering perennials at their peak in October. There are exotic displays of salvias and bedding plants.

The Head Gardener is arranging tours which she will let me have details of soon. I have been there and it competes with many stately home gardens, and also has a touch of Monet in Giverny in France. It is something special, which we may not realise is around the corner if we work in the City, or are a few stops away on the underground. Nearest Underground Station is Temple.

Contact me about the tours, which I can tell you more about if you are interested.

*Brendan Byrne Tel 020 8761 5651 or Email [brendan.byrne@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:brendan.byrne@tiscali.co.uk)*

**HONEYBEES STILL IN TROUBLE**

The honeybee problem is frequently covered in the press these days, but the government still seem reluctant to act to help them, despite promising a £10M research budget.

The effect of neonicotinoid insecticides (eg imidacloprid, IMD) is to block specific neural pathways in insects' nervous systems. It seems that bees are affected indirectly by use of these pesticides on other insects, and the cumulative impact of small doses over time affects the bees' ability to work and communicate effectively, with sudden, disastrous results. Neonicotinoids have been suspended or banned in France, Germany, Italy and Slovenia, but not yet in the UK or USA.

For more information, and to sign an online petition, visit [www.soilassociation.org/bees](http://www.soilassociation.org/bees).

There is also hope that the black honeybee native to Britain may be better able to withstand climate change and the varroa mite than the southern and eastern European bee favoured by beekeepers.

The Co-Operative supermarket is backing a study by the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders' Association. (Daily Telegraph, 18/5/09).

The Women's Institute has also joined the fray, calling on its members to plant bee-friendly flowers and flowering trees, and to urge local authorities to do likewise. As we all know, a succession of bee-accessible flowers are needed from spring to autumn. (Daily Telegraph, 7/7/09).

*Val Hunn*

**Northstead Road Hostas, 2009**

We were delighted to welcome over 60 people to our garden on a rain-threatened night in early June to see our collection of hostas in their best week of the season.

The preparation started in February, but in good military style was continuing into the last hour, before one of our helpers arrived to steady the ship. Thanks, Will!

Hospitality was dispensed, the collection drew rare praise and the sales table was cleared by close of play. At least four of the collection have gone to new homes and plants now reside in Dorset, Surrey and Westmorland as well as across South London.

Blue Blush, Blue Mouse Ears, Dorset Blue and Patriot were of particular interest, with Fire and Ice always being a winner.

Thanks are due to Lucy and Wendy for all their help, and also to Val and Dot from Lambeth Gardeners [LHS] who sat at the door taking the entrance money. We were also generously supported by Brockwell Art Services, Dulwich Bakery and Hootananny's who all donated prizes for the tombola. Altogether we raised over £250 for the Organ Fund.

An idea for next year's showing has already been floated. We'll keep you posted.

*Simon and Georgina Cooke*

(Simon and Georgina kindly opened their garden as part of the LHS Open Gardens Scheme, on the evening of Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2009)

## COACH OUTING: RHS GARDENS, WISLEY and LOSELEY PARK Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2009

The day dawned bright and clear for the first coach outing of the year, and the weather stayed lovely for the whole day – that was the beautiful late spring week, which now seems so long ago!

After a strangely convoluted journey, we arrived at **Wisley** in time for a late coffee, followed almost immediately by lunch. Too late to remember the neglected thermos flask in the cupboard at home! It has been out on every trip since, though.

Wisley, as ever, was apparently crowded, at the entrance, but once inside the multitude melts away and there is no problem seeing whatever you have planned to see – always a good idea to have a plan, as there is never enough time here, and never could be.

We headed to the amazing Glasshouse, and walked around this temperate and tropical mini-Eden Project - so much nicer, more compact, less claustrophobic and utterly absorbing. Outside, the lake by the bridge was attracting a good deal of attention – there were ducks around and people were riveted by a quacking noise from under the bridge – it was feared that ducklings were trapped. However, the source of the sound soon became clear when a flotilla of marsh frogs emerged, all croaking loudly!

The prairie-style borders (previously the Piet Oudulf borders) around the sweeping paths to the glasshouse were magnificent. The wild garden trial area on the far side of the Glasshouse was in full bloom. Our returning route took us through the alpine meadow, to the canal with its magnificent display of waterlilies – who needs Giverny?



*Loseley House from the Rose Garden*

Our second garden was not, as expected, Knowle Grange but **Loseley Park**. We have been here before, but I for one was not disappointed, as the Walled Garden is one of my favourite places, and the ice-cream one of my favourite naughty-but-nice things. The house, built in the 1560s, forms a wonderful backdrop to the gardens. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Walled Garden too was laid out, and has had many incarnations, including a re-design by Gertrude Jekyll and another change in 1991 when the Rose Garden was added as a birthday present from the owner Mike More-Molyneux to his wife Sarah. Now it comprises five gardens within the walls – the Rose Garden with

over 1,000 old-fashioned roses; the Herb Garden, itself divided into culinary, medicinal, household and decorative herbs; the tranquil White Garden, with central formal pool and fountain; the Organic Vegetable and Cut Flower Garden, which supplies the house, and includes a collection of Garden Organic Heritage Seed Library plants; and the Flower Garden, a dramatic series of plantings to provide vibrant colour from spring to the first frosts. Beside the walled garden runs the Moat Walk, a broad, raised, grassy walkway overlooking the moat and its wonderful border of herbaceous perennials. It was also an excellent vantage point for observing a Civil War battle which was being re-enacted by The Sealed Knot in one of Loseley's nearby fields. The afternoon tranquillity was punctured at intervals by the sound of cannon-fire, screams and shouted orders, and the view of massed pikemen marching hither and yon.

From here to the tea-room and an ice-cream, before the trip home, replete with the memories of a glorious day out.

Many thanks, Brendan, for such a cracking start to the season!

*Val Hunn*



*Fountain, the White Garden*

## **Talk: BLOOMING BRITAIN – a look at the GREAT GARDENS of the BRITISH ISLES**

**By Colin Jones, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

Colin, who has spoken to us before, is not only a keen gardener, photographer and traveller, but also a judge and accredited lecturer in horticulture. This talk covered a year travelling around the British Isles, and we were treated to a photographic tour of many beautiful gardens. We started in the winter at Wisley, with a duck on the ice-covered lily pond and frost on the shrubs; as a contrast, the glasshouse which had 1000 butterflies released in it for the public to see.

Welford Park, near Lambourne, is famous for its sheets of snowdrops, along the banks of a stream.

Narcissi bloom in the Scilly Isles from September to May. Treco Abbey gardens grow echiums, aeoniums, palms, ferns and other subtropical plants. In Cornwall, at the rediscovered and restored gardens of Heligan, the valley is full of tree ferns. At Tresillick the acidic soil is perfect for blue hydrangeas. Knighshayes in Devon, built in 1870, has a formal pool, with clipped yew hedges forming a backdrop for a statue. The National Trust propagate rare plants here.

In Dorset, the garden at Abbotsbury, with its subtropical microclimate, has a dramatic red bridge over a pool, surrounded by exotic plants. Heading into the Cotswolds, we saw a lovely magnolia at Westonbirt Arboretum, which has 18,000 trees, here well set off by daffodils. The wildflower meadow at Highgrove was stunning in blues and yellows, with a mown footpath meandering through to the house.

In Sussex, Leonardslee has a huge range of azaleas and rhododendrons in all colours, in its "Himalayan" glades. These are also displayed at the Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park. Penshurst Place in Kent (1346), the seat of Viscount de Lisle, has a Knot Garden of immaculately trimmed plants.

The RHS Northern Garden at Harlow Carr (as it always was) in Harrogate, Yorkshire, has the usual sweeping herbaceous borders and grassy paths, but its highlight is the streamside garden with stretches of candelabra primulas. A wild meadow of field poppies and cornflowers, and a limestone pavement with specialised alkaline-

loving plants growing in the cracks, are just two of its other attractions. In Northumbria, the Poison Garden at Alnwick Castle is an unusual favourite, and the Cascade Gardens are justly famous.

The Edinburgh Botanic Garden, established in 1670, covers 70 acres and has the tallest Palm House in the British Isles. The gardens at Arduaine, unfortunately soon to be closed by the National Trust for Scotland, are home to the blue Icelandic poppy, meconopsis.

Tatton Park in Cheshire has a Knot Garden, Italian Garden and a Japanese Garden with stone lanterns and a moss Mount Fuji, with chalk to symbolise snow. Powis Castle in north Wales (1680) stands high above its cascading Italianate terraces, giving a marvellous view over the surrounding countryside.

Hidcote's gardens were designed by Lawrence Johnston as "rooms", to protect them from the Cotswold Edge winds. Also in Gloucestershire, Kiftsgate Court Gardens (the famous rambler rose is named after them) is a private garden with lily ponds and fountains, well worth a visit.

Stourhead Landscape Garden (built 1741-80 by Henry Hoare) has the obligatorily picturesque lakes, streams, bridges, follies and grottoes, on a grand scale. Painshill Park (which we have visited), another landscape garden, has a Turkish Tent folly, abbey ruins and grotto lined with glittering feldspar.

In the east again, Beth Chatto's famous dry garden at Elmstead Market has the wonderful drought-resistant garden, planted on a former car park, and never watered since the original ground preparation. RHS Garden Hyde Hall in Essex has impressive stretches of gravel garden with drought-resistant planting.

At Great Dixter in Sussex, the late Christopher Lloyd enjoyed experimenting with vivid colour combinations. Sissinghurst in the Kentish High Weald was designed by Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson as a series of rooms, including the famous White Garden.

Again at RHS Garden Wisley we saw the magnificent Long Pond with water lilies.

This wonderful tour of famous and less well-known gardens ended with scenes of glorious autumn leaf colour at Winkworth Arboretum and Sheffield Park.

*Betty Cox*

## COACH OUTING: ABBEY COTTAGE GARDENS and HINTON AMPNER Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2009

When we reached Col Patrick Daniell's home, **Abbey Cottage**, after a long drive, we were invited onto a lawn sloping down to the house, and offered much-welcomed refreshments of tea, coffee and biscuits. After that we were ready to enjoy the delights of the garden!

Walking past an ancient apple tree I came to the potting shed, through which the vegetable garden is reached. The whole garden is run organically, and the vegetables show how effective this can be - runner beans up supports, onions, broad beans and potatoes, were all in their prime. Nearby, stand and gooseberry bushes were full of fruit.

In the meadow area, just beyond a silver birch, was the famous recycled rustic bus shelter with its shingled roof, transported up from the main road several years ago. A tall trimmed hedge of evergreen oak, laid out in a semicircle, encloses a stone sundial; box balls and field daisies form groups; the many trees include a golden catalpa, weeping copper beech and a *Ginkgo biloba*.



*The Pond Garden through the moon window* dated 1986. On one side, a "moon window" is cut in the hedge, to frame a red-leaved smoke bush, *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal purple'.

The terrace round the house is set with flagstones and brick walls to support the surrounding higher ground. Inset is a wooden seat, its back formed by stone walling, free-seeded erigeron giving it a cheerful look. A bed of *Alchemilla mollis* in full flower gives a vivid display of bright greens. A stone birdbath is set in brick paving, surrounded by black grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens') and pink diascias.

The whole garden is a plantsman's paradise; the variety of hedging; the walls used as a backdrop; *Actinidia kolomikta* with its blotchy white, pink and green leaves; clematis, sweet peas, roses, and many others. On the meadow side of the brick wall, large clumps of ferns gave a display both understated and effective. The borders held a wide selection of herbaceous plants and shrubs, all complementing each other, such as red *Rosa rubrifolia* with a fine-cut-leaved golden elder, sedum, acanthus and epimedium, such a variety of colour, plant and leaf shape.

I think a plaque set on one of the walls says what probably every gardener feels: "*A humble mark of gratitude for happiness passed*".

Betty Cox

Cleverly-placed vistas open up as you approach turns and corners. Through a grey-painted gate appears a black cast-iron pump with a raised brick water tank; alongside, a black metal seat, flanked by domes of variegated box, and behind, on the wall, a delicate double pink rose. Facing this was the vine house, the vine itself extremely old but still vigorous.

The pond garden is surrounded on all sides by clipped hedges, the pool a stone-edged rectangle, with fish and water lilies; in the centre, a fountain springs from a cormorant holding an eel; behind, a raised brick planter is inset with plaques, on e



*Happy Lambethans enjoy one of the many seats*

By the time we arrived at **Hinton Ampner**, the whole coach was very impressed with this beautiful, unspoilt part of England. The National Trust property and grounds did not disappoint us. Its present design owes much to the last Earl of Sherbourne, Ralph Dutton, who died in 1985. The original house had burnt down in 1960 but, undaunted, the owner rebuilt it in a neo-Georgian style. The grounds were immaculately tidy, and the colour schemes quite awesome. The sunken gardens, dating from 1935,



*Buddleia alternifolia*

and lots of hydrangeas about to bloom. Again the balance between light and shade had been perfectly worked out.

The clotted cream scones with raspberry jam served at the café were a true taste of the South-west. The hospitality of the staff was impeccable and gardeners were on hand to answer any questions. Barry, our replacement driver, a Devonian, went out of his way to introduce us to this part of the world, stopping at Winchester to tell us about a free vintage bus service offered on New Year's Day. He regaled us with stories about the "Royal Blue" Victoria to Penzance bus route which he drove, long before the National Express. Of all the visits Brendan has arranged, I felt I wanted to holiday in Hampshire. Perfect.

*Antony Glaser*

### **Abbey Cottage Postscript**

Under the auspices of the National Gardens Scheme I revisited Abbey Cottage on the 9th July. There were 12 in our Hampshire group, who delighted in the recommended anti-clockwise walk around. The group all agreed that the upkeep of the garden looked effortless, but we appreciated all the hard work that goes into maintaining it to such a high standard. The twice-a-week gardener, Dan, was busy mowing the numerous grass areas, having earlier shaped the box topiary into mushrooms. The rebuilt road-builder's caravan was compared to the one Roald Dahl used to write his books. The plantation was breathtaking in its vision. I had earlier paid attention to the specimen trees, but the shrubs and plants did not disappoint: dog wood, spindle, thistle and wild privet etc. Patrick further emphasised his organic support, by praising its moisture retention in this unsettled weather.

*Antony Glaser*

were so abundant with tea and Bourbon variety Roses, that I decided to buy a Rose Society Annual from eBay to further marvel at this wonderful plant. Then began a wonderful education. The *Buddleia alternifolia* was named as plant of the week. Its abundant pink blooms grew alongside the stem, quite unique. Then at the Autumn Border we saw the magnificently rare Asian *Weigela decora*, (Pearl bush) with its pale yellow-pink foliage. The herbaceous borders in the walled garden were splendid with blue delphiniums, euphorbias, and died-down irises. Nepeta (catmint) swayed in the wind. Everything was so perfect, even the vegetables were spotless - courgettes, broad beans, bronze fennel etc. The only drawback was a lack of labelling, particularly for the fruits, although the impressive "Helen" blackberry was labelled. Finally, the woods were similarly miraculous, hostas without slug damage,



*The Terrace, Hinton Ampner*

## ***INSIGHTS FROM A GARDENING BOOK...***

In your garden you can walk  
And with each plant and flower talk,  
View all their glories, from each one,  
Raise some rare mediation.

(by John Rea)

And from this poem, I can only assume that he was continually walking and looking either straight ahead or head held down to impart to us such a verse. But, I believe, a gardener needs to look up from time to time, and not only to assess the weather coming overhead. For in this aforementioned poem, he forgot to mention 'trees', unless, where he was walking was a very small patch of greenery, that was designed in a circular fashion having no trees within its borders or over the fencing to see.

Although, I'm not just talking about any kind of trees, there are many of those kinds available, kindly brought as a skinny-thinny tree of not much to see, then forgotten about until they've grown and grown of such thickness, as well as, never seeming to have stopped in height neither, as one doesn't look up and see this happening over the months and years, until your neck has tilted so far back and aches as you stand at such an awkward leaning angle. And, plus now too, the tree is right in front of your very eyes; up close, personal and intimate, well kind of, or so will it seem, as no doubt you've been and seen those trees that take up more room than could possibly have been foretold, even by a well-versed gardener of equal knowledge and imagination as thee.

However, trees are the prime ingredient in a garden. Such as the spinney, meaning a small grove of trees, and the rule being that they are planted in even numbers, and the 'clump', meaning trees that grow close together in threes and always by the rule that they are planted in odd numbers. And such regulation also goes for their yearly prune too, keeping them in a manageable size, both in stature and girth, because the composition of the overall tree scheme matters so much, when, for instance, you want to attach that hammock across and stretch out on reading an LHS Newsletter on a sunny Sunday afternoon, or having a picnic least not to be disturbed for an hour or two due to such a romantic spot created among the clumps. Or, as said by Alexander Pope (and as you read the poem below, you can tell he was lying down):

Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,  
And part admit, and part exclude the day;...  
There, interspers'd in lawns and opening glades,  
Thin trees arise that shun each others shade.  
Here in full light the russet plains extend:  
There wrapt in clouds, the bluish hills ascend.

### **LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE:**

A children's book on trees in the garden with illustrations. - **The Young Specialist Looks at....TREES** by **Alois Kosh**

The pruning of trees and shrubs, with a description of the methods practised in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - **The Pruning of Trees and Shrubs** by **W. Dallimore**

This book offers advice on the use of small trees, bushes and shrubs in the garden - **Shrubs, Bushes and Small Trees** by **Leslie Johns**

***THESE BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE FOR A 2 WEEK LOAN  
FROM THE LHS LIBRARY AT THE HUT.***

***(GARDEN BOOK DONATIONS WELCOME)***

*Mavarine Du-Marie, Librarian*

## **Talk: CARSHALTON LAVENDER** **By Roger Webb, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

Roger was originally one of six Trustees of the Bioregional Development Group covering Carshalton. He was allocated the subject of lavender growing, and luckily had family connections, through his grand parents, with the old lavender industry in the area. He liaised with Sutton Council, Yardley and Down View Prison to help revitalise the industry. The gravel and chalk had made the area from Mitcham and Streatham to the North Downs ideal for lavender growing in the 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1996 Roger asked Sutton Council for land for the project, and a half-derelict allotment site at Stanley Road was offered. Sponsorship was obtained from Yardley. Lavender cuttings were provided from the old bushes of many local residents. With the help of labour from Down View Prison at Banstead, 15,000 new plants were grown in 3" pots, and planted out on the field which they had ploughed, rotavated and scarified. Maintenance consisted of weeding, pruning and mowing the grass between the rows.

In 1999 the first lavender was harvested, by 20 people with sickles over 3 weekends! The crop was sent for distillation in Kent, and produced 8 litres of oil. They decided to get mechanised, and converted an old tea harvester – a two-man operation, whereby the lavender is cut by a 4' blade and blown into a 12' sack. More grants enabled an Open Weekend at the end of July, with the community invited to pick-their-own over part of the site, at £1 a bunch or £5 a bucket. Money is raised by the sale of lavender, plants, and lavender-assisted bread, beer, soup, scones, biscuits, arts and crafts and cosmetics, and a small distillation demonstration. The profits from the Open Weekend cover the year's running costs. The oil from the harvested crop is sold to a local manufacturer for use in cosmetics and toiletries. This year they have their own still, to use on the field, thanks to local sponsors who help with equipment. Distillation is a lengthy process – low-tech and labour-intensive, as it was in the

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Half a hundredweight can be distilled in the metre-square apparatus. The oils is released by steam, and 100 batches will be done, each taking 45-60 minutes, over a 2-week period.

There is a fair amount of maintenance needed, mostly mowing and pruning. The plants, now 16-17 years old, are gradually being replaced with cuttings grown on to 18". The best harvesting height is about 3'. Harvesting occurs at the optimum time for the oil; at this point, 1/3 of the flower spike will be in full flower, 1/3 will be still to come, and 1/3 will have gone over. On the field, two "intermediate" varieties of lavender are grown, silver-leaved traditional old English, and Vera, robust and with a long flower spike. Originally grown for oil in the south-east, they were imported from Holland in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

To prevent premature woody growth, plants are pruned twice a year - after flowering, and a light trim in February. This doubles the flower heads. They will not regenerate from old wood. It was interesting to hear that the Head family, who run Norfolk Lavender, moved from Mitcham to Heacham in the 1920's, to obtain more land, as the suburbs gradually infiltrated outer London. The fields at Heacham cover 50 acres, but most of their income is from the restaurant, souvenir shop and plant sales. Their other products use imported lavender oil from China.

Currently, there is a Carshalton fields workforce of 8 volunteers, with a nucleus of 2 field workers who put in 6-7 hours on Saturdays.

Rosemary beetle has been troublesome recently, but not as badly as in Yorkshire and Hampshire. An advertised weekend weeding session brought people from as far away as North London, Brighton and Dartford!

The oil and the by-product, lavender water, are turned into cosmetics and toiletries and sold by Naturallythinking, 7 High Street, Carshalton, SM5 3AP, 020 8773 3803  
[www.naturallythinking.com](http://www.naturallythinking.com)  
[www.carshaltonlavender.com](http://www.carshaltonlavender.com)

*Betty Cox / Val Hunn*

## COACH OUTING: KNEBORTH PARK and GARDENS; THE MANOR HOUSE, STEVINGTON Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009



*Knebworth from the herb garden*

with its mixture of gold and yellow leaved plants and flowers including lilies, roses, and marguerites; the Brick Garden with its blue and silver theme; a maze fashioned out of box and yew; and a wooded area where over 70 life-size dinosaurs can be found among the rhododendrons and redwoods. A large number of statues and sculptures (both classical and modern) are dotted all over the gardens adding both character and interest, supplemented at the time of our visit by an exhibition of statues made by artists from Zimbabwe. Two of the gardens particularly caught my eye. The herb garden was first designed by Gertrude Jekyll in 1907 but not built until 75 years later. When we visited, the garden was full of fragrance, bees and colour and, in addition to the thyme, sage and other herbs, roses, lavender, fuchsias, day lilies and clematis were flourishing.

The walled kitchen garden, built in 2000, was brimful of herbs, vegetables and fruit. Apples, plums, figs, raspberries and cherries were trained against the walls and up climbing frames. Potatoes, courgettes, lettuce, french and runner beans were flourishing. Bright orange marigolds, multi-coloured nasturtiums and lavender provided swathes of bright colour amongst the green.

What I particularly liked about the garden was that there were lots of seats where you could sit and enjoy the views or just doze in the sunshine.



*One of the modern sculptures*

Our second visit was a real treat for both the eye and the palate! Over the last 20 years - with no regular outside help but with lots of imagination and enthusiasm - Simon and Kathy Brown have converted a field into a dream garden at **The Manor House, Stevington**. The garden is made up of over 20 different areas including a formal French-style garden, an edible flower garden, an old-fashioned cottage garden, wild flower meadow, and an olive garden, as well as six art gardens based on works by Rothko, Monet, Mondrian, Hokusai, Hepworth and Kandinsky.

Kathy took us on a tour and explained some of the art connections and the inspirations for the garden. In the Hokusai garden, for instance, the Browns have used a series of tall grasses including calamagrostis and miscanthus to emulate the steep crashing waves seen in a Hokusai woodcut. The Rothko room uses dark purple beech, berberis and prunus set against the walls of a hornbeam hedge to convey the impression of murals. Kathy and Simon have taken inspiration from a Kandinsky painting "Improvisation Gorge" to develop a very colourful Mediterranean-style summer garden in an old sunken fishpond. Using stepladders and lots of plants in colourful containers they have paid homage to the Kandinsky theme. Plants include a variety of succulents, agaves, echiums, begonias, geraniums,

fuchsias, and a splendid dasy l irion which shimmered in the breeze. They have also drawn on history for ideas. For instance, in the French Garden Simon has commemorated a French trial from the 1600's and shaped 12 jurors out of the yew hedges. Kathy is well known for her use of edible flowers in cookery and we tried out various flowers growing in her edible flower garden including sunflower petals (which tasted a little like mange touts), day lily flowers and bronze fennel flower heads. Major collections of clematis and roses are dotted around the garden, all flourishing in the heavy clay soil. In various parts of the garden you could see impressive displays in containers, many very unusual, such as succulents growing in a tennis racquet, in egg cups and egg shells and in an old fashioned telephone. One tip a number of us took note of: growing hostas in hanging baskets is an excellent way to ward off the slugs and snails. The visit was rounded off with tea and delicious home-made cakes – all made by Kathy. A perfect end to a very inspiring visit.



*The French Garden*

Thanks to Brendan for organising a very uplifting day.

*Jean Gray*

## **THE HIGHGROVE FLORILEGIUM**

The summer exhibition at the Garden Museum is *The Highgrove Florilegium* – watercolours by over 70 of the leading botanical artists from around the world, who have painted plants and trees grown in the garden of HRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall. The watercolours are being published in a limited edition book by Addison Publications, with all royalties going to the Prince's Charities Foundation. The Garden Museum is the first British venue for the exhibition of these works, which are loaned with the kind permission of HRH The Prince of Wales. Distinguished botanists worked with the Head Gardener at Highgrove, to ensure that this great garden is represented in all its aspects by an appropriate selection of material, including plants that are useful or commonplace, rare and in decline, or just beautiful.

The exhibition runs from **12 May to 31 August 2009**

*Garden Museum*

*Lambeth Palace Road*

*London SE1 7LB*

*020 7401 8865 / 8869*

*www.gardenmuseum.org.uk*

*Open daily 10.30am – 5pm except closed the first Monday of each month*

*Admission - Adults £6*

*Senior citizens £5*

*Art Fund members £3*

*Children under 16 free*

## **Forthcoming exhibition – The Good Life**

**6 October 2009 - 21 February 2010**

This explores 100 years of "growing your own", through the good times and the more difficult years of the World Wars and the 1970s Oil Crisis. It will look at today's enthusiasm for growing vegetables and raise the question "is this just a passing fad, or is it something that is embedded deep in the psyche of people in Britain"?

*This blog was sent to me by someone who read it on the internet. I thought it was a hilarious but rather irreverent account! I have been in touch with Miss Jones, who would like to emphasise that she has not intended to offend anyone. She says "The blog is written in quite a mischievous (but very affectionate) way." She really love d taking part, and intends to enter again next year – if allowed!*

VH

## **I fought the Lambeth Horticultural Society, and the Lambeth Horticultural Society won, but I came second (Why Miss Jones blog, Sunday 19 July 2009)**

Previously on *Why Miss Jones*, I told you how I was grievously slighted by someone in authority at the Lambeth Horticultural Society, during the Lambeth Country Show. You may recall that I swore vengeance. Well, this weekend [steely, ominous voice] *it was time*.

The battlefield was the Domestic Classes of the 2009 Lambeth Country Show Flower Show (too many shows, but I cannot explain it any other way) - in particular, the baking categories. I did not, as I had proposed, learn skills from the world's best baking ninjas. I did not travel to Vienna and Kyoto. Instead, I searched deep, deep within myself – past the literature of the American renaissance, past my A-level French vocabulary and past all the lyrics to Duran Duran's *Rio* album – and drew on all I had learnt at the formica worktop of Mrs Jones. I also trusted in an email I received from a lovely lady called Valerie, a benign member of Lambeth Horticultural Society, who answered my plea about how to enter and also wished me good luck.

I put my entry form in the post, thereby sounding a warning. I would bring bloody warmongering to Class 76 Cranberry and Ginger Blondies. I would bring righteous fury to Class 77 Marmalade Cake. I would bring noble fire to Class 79 Chocolate Cherry Cookies. I would bring the ingredients to my kitchen on Friday night and spend hours baking, then end up scraping the lot into the bin at 1am in a tantrum of curdled hopes and burnt dreams, hot flour-streaked tears pouring down my cheeks.

Or so I thought. Instead, the gods of baking smiled on me on Friday night. The blondies and the cookies worked like a charm, despite the obstacles put in my path by LHS in the form of numerous errors in the recipes. For example:

*150g (5oz) white chocolate, broken into pieces*  
*50g (5oz) soft butter*

How much \*!##\*! butter? 50g? Or 5oz? Because they are really, really different amounts. Hear me when I say this, elderly recipe writers with your trembly-fingered typos, you will not destroy me. I AM STRONGER THAN YOU.

Unfortunately I was not quite strong enough to make a decent marmalade cake. I am blaming this on an extremely suspect jar of marmalade. My cake mix tasted disgusting, and alarm bells rang immediately, because everyone knows that cake mix tastes better than almost anything in the world. I then tasted the half-empty jar of marmalade. It too was abhorrent. However, I was not a sound judge, since marmalade always tastes like the foulest poison to me. I consider it literally the preserve of the devil.

I texted Miss W for advice. She had expressed enthusiasm for the marmalade cake and marmalade generally – yet, charitably, I was still allowing her to be my friend. I asked her if marmalade was meant to taste quite so repulsive. She told me probably not, and administered her usual pragmatic comfort, reminding me gently that I was entering the competition in an ironic and post-modern context. Let me tell you, I was not feeling ironic, post-modern anguish. It was the real thing.

So the marmalade, a brand new jar, was rotten. But what could I do? The shops were shut. I could only shove the cake in the oven, put the best of Teenage Fanclub on the kitchen stereo to calm me down, and hope for the best.

The sun rose over Brockwell Park on Saturday morning, and I made my way to the Flower Show tent with my freshly baked weapons. I walked up to the reception desk, told them my name and in return I was given this:

Oh yes, readers, I am kind of a big deal. These change hands for hundreds of pounds in certain tea shops and garden centres with wheelchair access.



The atmosphere in the tent was – heh – intense. People were nervously primping bonsai trees and smoothing out crocheted blankets. An elderly man was wiping stray smears of homemade jam from around the rim of a jar with the concentration and precision of a watchmaker.

I started to lay out my entries on their special, pink paper plates. Then a lady tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I would like to use some of her clingfilm. I felt a warm glow spread through me, from my sweating feet to the tips of my shaking fingers. It was a glow of camaraderie, but also of smugness because I may be a rookie, but I had remembered to bring my own clingfilm. So I said no thank you, and told her she was very kind. And to make conversation, and try to prolong the moment of respectful bonhomie at the competition coalface, I said, 'Oof! It's really hot in here, isn't it!'

'Oh,' she said ominously, striking a deadly blow at my ingenuous enthusiasm, 'This isn't hot. This is nothing compared to some shows.' She also told me that she had won the handicrafts cup a few years before. That put me in my place.

Once I had set out my plates, and spent several minutes moving them a few centimetres one way, then several centimetres back again, I wandered around the tent (which was still closed to non-exhibiting civilians) looking at all the other displays, without the crush of the general public. It was a special time and I thought this is what it would be like if you were allowed into The Louvre or The Metropolitan Museum Of Art in New York at dawn, just the greatest treasures of the world, and you. And about two dozen really competitive pensioners.

But then, a man shouted, 'Stop exhibiting!' and it was exactly like *Masterchef*, and all the arranging and fussing was over, and we had to leave the tent so that judging could begin.

A couple of hours later, I had been joined at the Lambeth Country Show by Miss W and [Marbury](#), and with them by my side I returned to the tent to Face Destiny.

Firstly, the marmalade cake was not placed. I was not surprised, given the rogue batch of marmalade. Thanks, Forest Hill branch of a popular supermarket chain, for RUINING MY LIFE.

But then there was this:



Two second places.  
**TWO SECOND PLACES.**  
I felt elated.  
I felt alive.  
I suddenly felt really,  
really tired.

And this:



Yes, you are right. I didn't totally win. But I rocked the Lambeth Horticultural to its foundations. I think. No one could say I was not a baking force to be reckoned with. All of south-east London will know and fear me. So, to the runner-up, the spoils. And here they are:



Three pounds. Three whole pounds. Two second-place prizes of one pound fifty. It's unfortunate that I then spent eleven pounds on my way home in Herne Hill's excellent branch of Oxfam, but I don't need to tell you that here, money is unimportant. Like all the great contests – *Mastermind*, *Fifteen To One* – prize money is irrelevant. It is about prestige. It is about respect. It is about glory. And now, I am only hungry for more.

## Talk: NAMAQUALAND SPRING By Dr Peter Brandham, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009

Dr Brandham is now retired, but spent nearly all his working life at the Jodrell Laboratory, Kew Gardens, where he still works as a volunteer. He was working on plant genetics and mutations, but despite this specialised subject, he developed a broad interest and love of plants. Today he talked about wild plants in the Tropics; this is relevant to us because many of these plants are the ancestors of plants, or are even the actual plants, that we grow here in our gardens.

Using a map, he showed us that Namaqualand is in the Western Cape of Africa, in the area between Cape Town and the border with Namibia. We were taken on a spring (September) tour of gardens and plants in this region, starting at Kirstenbosch Garden, on the eastern side of Table Mountain.

It is the same size as Kew, about 300 acres, but unlike Kew it rises up to 1500 feet above sea level, with the cliffs of Table Mountain forming its backdrop. Remarkably, there are a lot of oak trees here, of course not native to Africa, but brought as acorns 2-300 years ago by Dutch settlers. Otherwise, only South African native plants are grown here. There are 20,000 species to choose from, many attractive and showy, including arctotis; *Watsonia pyramidata* (iris family, not hardy in the UK); the Funeral Lily *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (fully hardy in the UK); *Strelitzia juncia* with narrow, rush-like leaves; proteas varying from 6 to 20 feet tall; *Leucospermum reflexum*, the “skyrocket bush”, whose fading red flowers hang down like a trail of fire; a huge collection of cycads; and the native *Lachenalia orchioides*, looking very like one of our orchids, with spotted stems and blue flowers, but a member of the lily family.

Everywhere were different euphorbias, varying from shrubs to trees – there are 20,000 species – and aloes, from tiny 6 inch flowering plants to 40 foot trees.

Next to Kirstenbosch is the Lion Rock, a nature reserve, where the native flora grow wild.

*Leucodendrium argenteum* is a silvery-white tree, and the *Lachenalia orchioides* is green.

On to Cape Point, where the Atlantic breakers roll in, and in spring drifts of single species appear, such as the pink-flowered *Watsonia humilis*, so-called because at 18 inches high it is

the smallest of the watsonias. Here too is *Lachenalia orthopetala*, with cream, orange-tipped flowers.

Heading north towards Calvinia, the climate becomes hotter and drier and the landscape flatter, the mountains worn down to stumps. Plants are smaller, with strange adaptations, such as *Gaultheria diffusa* which has small black shiny lumps on some of its flowerheads. These look like ladybirds, and are decoys to lure ladybirds onto the flowers for pollination. Here Dr Brandham’s team discovered a new white lachenalia, and named it “alba”.

Further north, in a moorland-like area, was an acre of *Gazania aurea*, a plant well-known in the UK, with false beetles on every petal. Here also were parasitic plants, only the flowers showing above the ground, and tiny plants such as *Daubenia aurea*, formed of two leathery leaves, between which the flowers spring up. Near Worcester, further south again, is the Carew Garden of South African native species. More aloes – three species from small and bushy to huge and tree-like; and the cactus-like *Euphorbia horrida*.

In Namaqualand proper, near the Clan William Dam (an artificial lake), were yet more euphorbias, gasterias – succulents with striped leaves, *Aloe variegata*, *Lachenalia violacea*, and a Praying Mantis! The temperature can reach 45-50° C, extremely hot, but plants like *Gladiolus equitans*, with curved, daggerlike leaves and orange flowers, and *Ornithogalum secundum*, whose huge flower-spike flowers after the leaves have died off, are able to survive.

There are no cacti native to Africa, but back towards Cape Town we saw Prickly Pears (*Opuntia*) being grown as a crop. This was a mutant with no spines, being used as cattle feed, providing nutrition and fluid, and utilising otherwise barren land.

We ended with the view across Table Bay, taken from the winding and dangerous road which creeps up the side of Table Mountain, looking out over Cape Town at night, over the glittering lights, to the mist coming in from the sea.....

Val Hunn

## Dates for 2009

- August 26<sup>th</sup>** Talk: Preparing entries for the horticultural show  
**John Burrows** *John Burrows is an experienced national judge. He will discuss and demonstrate the preparation and presentation of horticultural entries for our Summer Show.*
- September 5<sup>th</sup>** **LHS Summer Show**
- September 23<sup>rd</sup>** Talk: Nature reserves and wildlife gardening  
**Rebecca Clark and Reuben Hawkwood** *Our speakers work for the Trust for Urban Ecology. They will speak about and show the wide variety of schemes in which the Trust is involved.*
- October 28<sup>th</sup>** **LHS Prize-Giving and Social**
- November 25<sup>th</sup>** Talk: Flower painting through the seasons  
**Audrey Hammond** *To take us up to the end of our year, we will once again be able to watch and listen to Audrey as she tells us about painting her favourite subjects, flowers.  
Tonight she will show us slides of recent flower paintings, "in season"; then she will give a demonstration of flower painting in watercolour.  
Paintings and prints will be on sale.*

*Talks take place on the fourth Wednesday of every month from April to November inclusive.*

**All talks take place in the Nettlefold Hall at the West Norwood Library Centre at 8.00pm (doors open 7.30pm)**

**Entry is free and non-members are welcome!**

The LHS Summer Show is on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2009  
If you have not entered anything before, why not give it a try?  
Have a look at the enclosed Show Schedule – if you need more details,  
the Rules are on our website or available at The Hut.  
Also, come to our talk on August 26<sup>th</sup> (see above)  
for hints and tips on showing!  
You could push the boat out with vegetables, flowers,  
jams, cakes, handicrafts or floral art – the more  
people who enter, the merrier!  
Don't be shy – we are all amateurs – and you could win a prize!  
Good luck!

## TRADING HUT

The TRADING HUT is well stocked for the autumn – prices are competitive and the advice is free!

Cedar Tree Close, Cedar Tree Grove (off Lakeview Road, Knights Hill, London SE27)

### Opening times:

Saturday: 2.00pm – 4.30 pm (last customer 4.15)

Sunday: 10.00am – 12.30pm (last customer 12.15)

**Closed Saturday 5th September – Summer Show (Nettlefold Hall, 2pm)**

**Last day open before Christmas – Sunday 6th December 2009**

**Spring reopening – Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

The volunteers wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year – and look forward to helping you with your Christmas shopping!



## AUTUMN BULBS

The Hut has a wide selection of bulbs to plant this autumn, with compost appropriate for tubs and containers. Come early to get the best selection!

Stuck for ideas for Christmas presents? Try our pre-planted bulb baskets, or some of the other gardening extras which we keep in stock, such as tools or gloves.

### LAMBETH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

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