



NEWSLETTER

Issue 74

Autumn 2011



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EDITORIAL

Well, I was right last time about the ash and the oak – the summer is turning out to be a soak. After the spring drought, we need the rain, but I do wish it would confine itself to the hours of darkness! Despite the dull days, things do seem to be growing away well now – let’s hope the vegetables catch up in time for the Summer Show on 3rd September - of which, more later.

First, to the Lambeth Country Show of 16th/17th July. Once more under the guiding hand of Matilda Smith, it went like clockwork. Liaising for the first time with the new Lambeth Council Show Co-ordinator, Ben Quarrell, Matilda got everything to happen on schedule – or so it seemed to us! Many thanks, Matilda, for taking it all on again. The atmosphere in the Flower Tent was different this year - there seemed to be a much greater interest from the public, especially in the vegetable sections - people asked a lot of questions, and new entrants were overjoyed to receive a prize. A lot of people said they had started growing vegetables at home in pots. The domestic classes were very well-subscribed, and the vegetable animals provoked great hilarity. A special entry, the vegetable Royal Wedding (‘Royal Veging’), was superb – I do hope someone sent a photo to the happy couple. Floral Art was not well subscribed – is this a trend? Lovely pictures, from local schoolchildren, were displayed. The weather played into our hands – sunny spells (to tempt people to the show) punctuated by bouts of torrential rain (to drive them into the Flower Show tent). The stewards were kept busy dispensing information and advice, The Hut shop did well, and we got 18 new members! Welcome, all of you! Thanks are due to all who helped – the stewards, the catering team, those who transported our stuff to the show, laboured to put our section together, take it down afterwards and transport it back again. Thank you.

As you read this, you may just have been to our last Open Garden of the season – Peter and Ann Shaw’s garden in South Croxted Road. From the look of the raspberries on my allotment, soft fruit is having a good year – so the Shaws’ huge array of soft fruit, built up by David over many years, should be at its best. If this reaches you before Sunday 7th August – do go and have a look! Similarly, we have just one more coach outing to look forward to - Mount Ephraim Gardens and Marle Place, both in Kent,

on Saturday 10th September. There may be a few places left – if you want to join us, please contact Brendan (details on p16). We have had a super season of coach outings, with Brendan's usual good luck with the weather – we only got really wet at Hampton Court! The spring trip to Pashley Manor Gardens and Hole Park was a delight – so many lovely flowers. The contrast between Hampton Court and Wind in the Willows could not have been greater! And to have a whole day at Penshurst Place, to be able to see the house and the garden, and still not get to the village – well, we'll just have to go again!

You will probably all have heard by now that the Nettlefold Hall, where we hold our talks, committee meetings and shows, has been out of action for a few weeks due to flooding – apparently caused by the theft of lead from the roof. We have been assured that it will reopen – we just don't know when! Committee meeting have been relocated to our secretary's front room, but the talks and shows need a larger venue. The August talk will be held in St Luke's Church, opposite the Nettlefold Hall, and possibly the September talk too. The Summer Show will also be held in St Luke's Church – exciting, the challenge of a new venue! We will try to keep the electronic subscribers updated by email, or by notices on the website; otherwise, please contact the Secretary close to the time of each event by email or phone – details on p16. We will also post a notice on the Nettlefold Hall shutters on the day of each event. Please tell your friends of any change!

At the Lambeth Country Show, we offered new members a special Show deal – membership for the remainder of 2011 plus all of 2012 for £7.50. We have decided to extend this for the rest of this year, until we close the membership list – usually in November. So if you have a friend who would like to join, and wants to shop at The Hut this autumn – tell them about this deal!

We are looking for more gardens for next year's LHS Open Gardens scheme – if you would like to open your garden for an afternoon, for other members to enjoy, please let me know (details on p16). You don't have to be NGS standard – and every person who has been kind enough to open so far has thoroughly enjoyed it – as have the visitors! Go on – give it a try!

The Spring 2012 Newsletter will be the last on your current subscription, and will come with a subscription renewal form inside it! Copy date for articles/snippets/announcements etc is Sunday 15th January 2012.

The last thing I must do is thank my regular contributors, Antony Glaser, Jean Gray and Betty Cox, for adding some extra interest to the newsletter. Contributions are always very welcome!

Happy gardening for the rest of 2011, and enjoy the Festive Season!

Val Hunn

FORTHCOMING OUTING TO HIGHGROVE - Wednesday 12th OCTOBER 2011

I have a limited number of places for this privately organised visit to the private garden of their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. This garden is a must-visit in one's lifetime! It is a series of interlinked spaces, each with its own character and purpose, weaving around the house and responding to every change in colour and texture

The tour lasts about 2 hours and is a walk of about 2 miles. We must all stay together for security reasons. It is best to wear stout footwear and suitable clothing, as tours continue during wet weather. Security is tight, and we must produce a passport, driving licence or a bus pass when we reach Highgrove.

The coach will leave from Victoria Railway Station at 10am. The cost is £45.

Places will be reserved on a first-come basis.

To reserve a place please call or email me - do not send any cheques until you are guaranteed a place.

Brendan Byrne

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DISCOUNT OFFER AT BRIXTON FLOWER SHOP

Janet Edwards has very kindly offered members of the LHS 10% discount on every £25 spent at her emporium. Please remember to show your membership card!

Janet Edwards London, Bespoke Flowers and Gifts, 6 Arlington Parade, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RH

08000 320732 email: enquiries@janetedwardslondon.com website: www.janetedwardslondon.com

COACH OUTING: PASHLEY MANOR and HOLE PARK

Saturday 7th May 2011

Our first outing of the year was to Pashley Manor Gardens near Ticehurst in East Sussex and then on to Hole Park near Tenterden in Kent.

Pashley has been described as one of the finest gardens in England and certainly lived up to its reputation. Created in the mid-19th century, the gardens were first open to the public in 1992. They border an attractive privately-owned manor house where Anne Boleyn was said to have lived during her childhood. A number of different gardens have been created including herbaceous borders, a rose garden, a Victorian greenhouse and a kitchen garden. There are also lots of ponds and fountains. Our visit coincided with the Annual Tulip Festival. Because of this year's early spring, there were few tulips left in the gardens themselves though around 2,000 cut tulips in vases from 60 times Chelsea Gold medal winners Bloms Bulbs were on show in a marquee.

There was lots of colour throughout. Although the roses themselves were only just beginning to open, the rose garden was also home to flag iris, aquilegia, London Pride and lupins. The Victorian greenhouse nearby was filled with pelargoniums and colourful passion flowers. Nearby was the kitchen garden where a wide range of vegetables, fruit and herbs had been planted. These included globe artichokes, lettuce,

spinach, broad beans, potatoes, broccoli, peas, fennel, onions and a row of standard gooseberry bushes.

There were plenty of seats where we could enjoy the sunshine and admire both the gardens themselves, and also the many modern sculptures which graced the gardens. These sculptures were all strategically placed to blend in with their surroundings – eg a boy reading a book which had been placed on the diving board of the swimming pool.



Small boy sculpture and tulips, by the pool



Hole Park, with the owner's vintage Rolls-Royce!
little spot with a newly built Japanese-type wooden bridge over a small pond surrounded by hostas and gunnera.

The garden boasted many fine trees, including a pink Judas tree in full bloom. Statues had been carefully positioned throughout the garden. These included a striking bronze "The Eagle's Slayer" which had been exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The visit was rounded off with a very welcome cup of tea and delicious homemade cake served by the owner in the Stable Yard.

A hidden gem: Brendan, many thanks for introducing it to us. Thanks also to Ron for getting us safely there and back.

Jean Gray

After a spot of lunch, it was time to make our way to **Hole Park**. The owner, Edward Barham, was at the gate to welcome us and give us a quick potted history of the house and its 15 acre garden. We were then given a map and left to our own devices.

First opened in 1927, the gardens range from formal gardens laid out in the Edwardian style (including a walled garden with deep beds, a sunken garden and a millennium garden with a pond full of crested newts) to a less formal area including a large meadow and woodland. The garden is known for its extensive yew hedges which were planted in the 1920s and take weeks to cut. (Glad it's not my job!). Although the bluebells were virtually over in the woodland garden, the magnificent display of colour from the azaleas and rhododendrons more than made up for this. Exploring

the woodland, we came across the Dell, a very peaceful

GARDENS of the CITY of LONDON

On 24th May, during Chelsea week, I joined a walk organised and led by Janine Wookey (LHS member and local area National Gardens Scheme organiser) for the benefit of the NGS.

We had an excellent and entertaining professional guide, Jacqui Dunnet, whose breadth and depth of knowledge, of both the City of London and plants, was amazing.

Between 10am and 4pm we visited, by my reckoning, seventeen gardens, many attached to churches and Livery Company halls. The weather was kind, dry and not too hot, and I'm glad I wore comfortable shoes! Some of the gardens were of moderate size, some little bigger than flower beds, but all had a fascinating history. The City is a wonderful place to walk around – everywhere are signs of its past, and a good many plaques and boards with information to help the visitor sort it all out.

We started at **St Paul's Information Centre**, opposite the cathedral. The planting in this small area is flowering perennials, chosen for the bees from the hive on the cathedral roof. The plane trees are protected, and any tree removed must be replaced.



Christ Church, Greyfriars garden

Christ Church, Greyfriars was originally Franciscan, and was bombed in World War 2 (WW2). The garden used to be a rose garden, but the soil soured, and it is now a cottage garden with 3,000 perennial plants. Housed in the ruined choir of the church, there are bird and bee boxes on wooden columns, and Sir Thomas Malory is buried in the corner.

Postman's Park is the graveyard of St Botolph's, Aldersgate. Quite a sizeable area, it is sheltered and has tree ferns, a *Davidia involucrata* (handkerchief tree), mimosa and banana plants which survive the winter and can produce fruit. However, one's abiding memory is of the dozens of Doulton ceramic plaques, set up in 1900 as a memorial to G F Watts, commemorating the heroic self-sacrifice of ordinary people; not a dry eye in the group.

The tiny church of **St Ann and St Agnes**, Gresham Street (formerly St Ann in the Willows) has a very wet garden – here the Walbrook was dammed by a Roman wall. We found stachyosaurus, St John's wort (to drive away the Devil), mahonia, and fatshedera with berries (a cross between fatsia and hedera).

Noble Street Wild Garden is in a ruined, excavated area – a bombed site, within mediaeval walls showing some red Roman tiles. Here are buddleia, poppies, buttercups, valerian, and vetch.

The **Barbers' Physic Garden** belongs to the Barber Surgeons' Guild. Set in a small walled ruin, it bursts with herbs, and a handy guide to the planting is provided: *Camellia sinensis* (tea), taxodium (yew), liquorice – chewed by Roman soldiers to stop them sweating, so they could march further without water), opium poppy (this keeps mysteriously vanishing from the garden) and many more; trees include a *Pawlonia tomentosa* and two liriodendrons.

We passed through the Barbican with its 12 miles of window boxes, and lovely **Water Garden** with water lilies – only 18" deep, it is prone to algae – arriving at a walkway from where we could admire the **Salters' Hall Garden**. Designed by David Hicks, this is filled with roses made leggy by the shade cast by St Alphage's Church. The Salters' Hall, made of cream concrete, overlooks the garden and forms a lovely, reflective background.



The Gardener

The tiny **Brewers' Hall Garden**, off London Wall, is a raised bed with a famous sculpture – "The Gardener" by Karin Jonzen, 1971.



The water garden

Continuing through **Aldermanbury Square**, a popular open space with silver birches, pleached plane trees and small fountains, we reached the garden of **St Mary Aldermanbury**. A large plaque informed us that the church, damaged by the Great Fire (1666) and WW2 bombing, has been rebuilt in Missouri! There is a memorial to Shakespeare, raised by several of his friends who worshipped here. A very large tree, a taxodium, was brought by Sir John Tradescant from Virginia.

Behind the Guildhall and St Lawrence Jewry, where Aldermanbury meets Gresham Street, is a beautiful modern **water garden**, with yellow irises and bulrushes, a lovely spot for lunching office workers.

The **Goldsmiths' Hall Garden**, originally the churchyard of St John Zachary, lies opposite the Goldsmiths' Hall, next to the modern headquarters of Lloyds Bank. The lower garden was designed by PT Shepherd and houses the sculpture "The Three Printers" by Wilfred Dudeney, 1957. The lawns are surrounded by shrubs and perennials, with plenty of seating for office lunchers.

Back at **St Paul's Cathedral**, the garden dates from 1889. David Jones created the garden to represent religion; but some of his planting has gone, as has recognition of American help in WW2, in the name of biodiversity, to encourage birds. The trees and shrubs include a large *Abies grandia*, *Hydrangea sarcococca* (berries in winter) and a fremontodendron. Some of this garden is still being replanted.

Just down Cannon Street is the 1951 **Festival Memorial Garden**, designed at the time of the Festival of Britain by Alfred Richardson. In the form of an avenue walk, it has pleached limes and a very large *Catalpa bignonioides*.



The Three Printers

The huge gardens of **25 Cannon Street** are built over a car park! Designed in the 1950s, they are difficult to maintain because of the shallow soil. There is a beautiful *Betula jacquemontii*, and the planting is spectacular.



Cleary Gardens

Finally, we arrived at **Cleary Gardens**, built on three levels in 1947, on the bombed site of the Financial Times printing works, by Joseph Brandis, cordwainer, and his son Jack. Now associated with Love Valley Wines, it is in the vintners' ward, and so supported by winemakers. It is dedicated to the memory of Fred Cleary, who after WW2 worked to keep open spaces for gardens. There is a Roman bath house on the lower level. Charles Dickens used to meet Mary Beadle here. Today it is a tree-and flower-filled area, with finches, tits, starlings and blackbirds, feasting at the many feeders. We sat resting our feet in the shade of the taxodium (swamp cypress) and

metasequoia, and pondered on the many people, down through history, who have enabled our City to have so many lovely gardens; and there are many more.....

Val Hunn

Janine's company is: Gardens Etc: www.gardentoursetc.co.uk

National Gardens Scheme: www.ngs.org.uk

For more information on City of London gardens, try:

www.gardensofthecityoflondon.co.uk (suggests several routes)

www.cityoflondon.co.uk (downloadable gardens leaflet and map)

www.wildlondon.org.uk (pamphlet, "London: garden city" on the loss of garden space all over London)

Talk: BEDDING PLANTS by Tony Pizzoferro, 25th May 2011

Unfortunately our booked speaker, Chris Smith of Pennard Plants, was unable to be with us this evening. At very short notice our redoubtable Chairman, Tony Pizzoferro, collected some raw materials from The Hut, and gave one of the off-the-cuff lecture/demonstrations at which he excels.

Luckily a few bedding plants were left from the Bedding Plants Sale held each May at The Hut, and these formed the basis of his talk.

What are bedding plants? Are they annuals for spring/summer display? Have they a lifespan of a year or less?

There are four basic features which define a bedding plant:

1. It is raised elsewhere than its final growing place
2. It is grown for its decorative qualities (rather than edible qualities)
3. It is planted out while still growing, eg as a plug plant
4. Its display period is quite limited – weeks or months

The plant is moved at a leafy stage into its final place – garden, container etc – where it produces its display for a limited time.

From early Victorian times bedding was a theme in parks and grand gardens. It went out of fashion, but is now back, in a moderate way – to provide a splash of colour after the spring bulbs, daffodils and tulips. Local authorities still do massed bedding displays, especially at the seaside, eg Eastbourne promenade, as an attraction for visitors. Bedding is also popular in gardens, containers and hanging baskets, but has moved away from long rows of one or two types.

Tony ran through a list of recommended plants, showing examples of most:

- Fuchsias – ideal, can be hardy, trailing or upright, with red or green foliage and stems.
- Pelargoniums – zonal types are good as dot plants, ivy-leaved are trailing.
- Impatiens (Busy Lizzie) – grow in sun or shade, versatile, good for containers or hanging baskets.
- Nemesia has flowers and scent.
- Brachycombe, or Swamp River daisy – feathery foliage, bluish or white flowers, tumbling habit.
- Angelona, Angel Mist – single bunny-rabbit flowers, lasts for ages, upright or trailing.
- Petunias – can be upright or hanging. The original surfinias were propagated by cuttings and licensed. Now there are several types. Free-flowering, long season, wide range of colours.
- Scaevola – small fan-shaped flowers, purple, white or pink.
- Lobelia – upright or trailing, good for hanging baskets, large plants can flower for ages with masses of flowers.
- Chocamocca – related to dahlias – dark purple flowers, smells of chocolate.
- Non-stop begonias – keep the tubers over winter.
- Fibrous-rooted begonias – come as plugs, green/red leaves, red, pink or white flowers.



Nemesia strumosa

We were reminded about dead-heading – do this regularly, as it stops the plant setting seed and prolongs flowering.

Bedding plants need regular feeding – use an all-round feed such as 6X, Growmore, Phostrogen or Miracle-Gro.

Then came the potting demonstration - how to plant several plants into one container.

- The compost used was $\frac{1}{3}$ multipurpose compost; $\frac{1}{3}$ John Innes No 3 (provides grit to help prevent vine weevil); $\frac{1}{3}$ organic garden compost from a bin, plus some slow-release fertiliser and water-holding gel.
- The holes in the bottom of the container were covered with crocks – these can be broken pots, or bits of polystyrene, stones etc. These also add weight and save compost.



- The container was filled with compost – but first the plants were taken from their pots, and the empty pots were planted, taking up all the top of the container, filling around them with compost. Any spaces were used for plug plants, such as petunia or lobelia. Then the pots were taken out one by one, and the plants – penstemons, pelargoniums, petunias – inserted into the correct spaces.

BINGO! It looked lovely!

Val Hunn

*A typical hanging basket –
marigolds, petunias, trailing fuchsia*

MIND YOUR DEADHEADING!

Removing brown, spent flowers with scissors or secateurs will make a huge contribution to keeping your garden looking fresh during the summer.

Perennials such as valerian, heleniums, penstemons and many perennial daisies can be kept in flower for months if deadheaded.

The stems of alstroemeria can be pulled from the base, so that more flowering stems can appear.

Annuals, such as sweet peas, calendulas, cerinthe, cosmos, Californian poppy, larkspur, nigella, poppies, blue cornflower and scabious, will flower until late autumn if not allowed to set seed. However, stop snipping by early September if you want to collect your own seed.

If buddleia flowers are cut off as they go brown, more will appear.

Repeat-flowering roses need deadheading so they can re-bloom. However, leave once-flowering species roses and ramblers – let them form decorative hips.

To produce better plants next year, deadhead lupins, named paeonies, perennial eryngiums, oriental poppies and dianthus, to conserve their energy.

Cut back hard early-flowering hardy geraniums, phloxes, violas and pulmonarias, to promote new leaves and a second flush of flowers.

Remove most of the seedheads of copious self-seeders such as poppies, foxgloves and aquilegias, or you will get a sea of unwanted seedlings

(Source: Val Bourne, Telegraph Gardening, 18th June 2011)

TAKE CARE OF YOUR ROSES

If your rose flowers have gone soggy in the rain, pick them off before they go mouldy, as well as any fallen petals. Remove spent blooms of repeat-flowering roses to encourage new flowers. Leave once-only flowerers to produce hips.

Now the first flush is over, feed with a specialist rose food or Vitax Q4, to keep the foliage healthy and promote another flush of flowers.

Check for black spot and remove any spotted leaves from the plant or the ground to prevent spores being splashed up by rain, and dispose of them by burning or via the rubbish bin.

Now is a good time to order a replacement for any sickly or feeble rose. Dig out the old plant and replace all the soil, with added bonemeal to encourage root development.

Next February, apply a potash-rich feed to harden the wood; in April and July apply a specialist rose food to promote flowers. A well-fed rose in peak condition can combat disease better.

As many rose diseases come from spores splashed up from the soil by rain, underplanting with non-aggressive perennials helps prevent this as they provide a barrier. Try violets, nepetas, and smaller hardy geraniums.

(Source: Val Bourne, Telegraph Gardening, 16th July 2011)

COACH OUTING: HAMPTON COURT PALACE and WIND in the WILLOWS

Saturday 18th June 2011

We set off on this trip in some trepidation, as the weather forecast was not good, and a few drops of rain fell on the short journey to **Hampton Court**. On arrival, we were able to see the Rose Garden and some of the Wilderness on a strangely tortuous journey to the “facilities”, the reason for which became clear once we were inside the palace – a huge concert venue had been built over one of the main thoroughfares. We concentrated our time on the Tudor apartments, and spent a happy couple of hours in the 16th century, encountering Henry VIII himself several times, as he wandered his courts with a wife, a handmaid and a trio of minstrels. It was humbling to be in the Great Hall and the Great Watching Chamber, mindful of the events which had occurred here, some of which changed our country for ever.

The Chapel Royal was most impressive, with the upstairs private balcony arranged for Henry and his wife of the moment to kneel unseen by the rest of the Court. The Chapel Court Garden, enclosed by the Tudor buildings, is set up to show the animals used by the various families on their coats of arms, each animal perched on a striped pole with a small herb garden beside it. We had no time to see the enormous Palace Gardens, but were afforded tantalising peeks at various gardens from the windows of the Georgian apartments in passing. (*Roving reporter Antony Glaser writes about the gardens on the next page.*)

The Tudor kitchens, where over 200 servants worked, was the most tremendous experience, with the vast blazing fire and very lifelike cuts of meat on display. After lunch in the privy kitchen, once Elizabeth I’s private kitchen, we headed out to rejoin the coach – which was when it really started raining!



The Chapel Court Garden



The central waterway at Wind in the Willows

A damp coachload of Lambethans eventually disembarked at **Wind in the Willows**, at Higher Denham. This unassuming property, with a 3-acre garden, was bought by Mr & Mrs Ron James 28 years ago, as they wanted somewhere with mature trees. Ron told us how they had developed the garden, which has the River Misbourne, a chalk stream, on one side, and the mill stream on the other – and in the middle, another waterway which was once a commercial watercress bed! The water table is only a foot beneath one’s feet, the grass is always green, and damp-loving plants thrive. The garden, which is home to over 50 species of bird and 13 species of butterfly, divides into three areas, connected by bridges over the waterways. The formal gardens are lawns with trees and shrubs, including weeping beech and golden elm. The woodland garden has beech, oak, ash and very large hornbeams, sheltering hostas, honeysuckles, rhododendrons, geraniums and alliums. In the wilderness area are rowan, old coppiced hazel, laburnum and twisting, secret pathways beside the water, a home for water voles.

The sun came out, and we had tea and biscuits on the spacious terrace, overwhelmed by the sheer tranquillity of the place.

What a splendid day, at two very contrasting places!

Val Hunn

Lambethans enjoy a rest in the wilderness



HAMPTON COURT GARDENS (*Antony Glaser*)

Hampton Court is the finest surviving Anglo-Dutch garden in Europe, as demonstrated by the restored Privy and the Orangery Gardens. It is one of those places where if you have not visited it in your lifetime, you would have missed out. For us living in London it is a hidden treasure around the corner.

What impressed me was the Great Vine, at the end of the walk, almost the largest vine in the world - the Black Hamburg specimen planted by Lancelot Capability Brown in 1768. Its deep root system outside the glass house needs to be seen to be believed. Walking back we saw the Knot Garden, designed by Ernest Law in 1924, a Tudor revivalist who steadfastly re-created the type of garden found in the 16th century. The Privy Garden had always been the Monarch's own plot, and it was restored in 1995 as it was in 1702 for William III, using the same original variety of plants. The wrought iron screens by Jean Tijou and the statuary were all part of the original garden. The statues have been re-carved and the originals can be found in the orangery in the King's Apartments. Queen Mary's exotics can be seen today, in attractive Delft pots, in the Lower Orangery Garden. These tender plants would have been overwintered in the Orangery behind, a building showing the Triumphs of Caesar by Magenta. Orange and lemon trees were popular specimens then, as were cacti.

Alongside the Privy Garden is the Pond Garden. In the 16th Century the ponds were stocked with fish for the palace kitchens. By 1690 they were drained and used by Mary II for her exotics from the Netherlands. Today spring and summer bedding abound.



The Pond Garden (photo: Antony Glaser)

etc. However, other winners were the white cosmos, foxgloves, poppies and lilies. There was a sprinkling of sweet peas dotted around, with *Crococsmia* 'Solfatare', Canterbury bells and *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'. Regrettably I did not visit the Maze, Great Fountain Garden, or the Long Water. Time just flew by, and I made it to the shop, before the torrential rain reinforced the scale of the place. I cannot wait to go again.

The Tiltyard area is still in evidence. This was the sports area of Henry VIII, and originally there were five towers. The Tiltyard Café is the only surviving tower. I was most impressed with the stunning display of bedding plants before the café. There were marigolds, several begonia specimens, tobacco plants and primroses. The Rose Garden alongside the Café had many rare specimens of roses, but the capricious summer has been cruel. The statues of Flora and Adonis face each other and Abundance nurses her children in this scented garden, once a kitchen garden.

The herbaceous borders alongside the Royal Tennis courts were amazing. There were so many different specimens of geranium, 'Johnson's Blue', 'Rozanne' and 'Brookside'. The achillea plants also flattered the visitors with their varieties - 'Walter Funcke', 'Fornsett Fletton'

THE CHELSEA FRINGE 2012

Tim Richardson is the creative director of this new celebration of gardening, "a London-based festival which reaches out to all those who, for one reason or another, do not feel that Chelsea Flower Show is for them."

It is aimed at anyone who appreciates the beauty and rich rewards offered by flowers, gardens and gardening. The plan is for events to happen all over London, from the West End to local neighbourhoods where communities can participate. Tim would like horticultural "happenings" to spring up in unlikely places to surprise and delight passers-by. Gardens may appear in boats or lorries; museums and galleries could have plant-themed displays; "pleasure gardens" would open, like the old Vauxhall Gardens, as after-dark areas of flower-themed restaurants and bars with music. Hidden gardens could be revealed and new gardens created, thus leaving a more permanent legacy than the traditional flower shows.

Tim has a steering group of people well-known in the gardening world, and sponsors are in place for many events already. The RHS is fully supportive, and although the Chelsea Fringe is independent, it is intended to complement and bolster the main Chelsea Flower Show in a symbiotic way.

For more information, see: www.chelseafringe.com

(Source: Tim Richardson, *Telegraph Gardening*, 18th June 2011)

PEAT – SOIL CONDITIONING or BRAIN CONDITIONING?

Geoff Hamilton is credited with having said that gardeners buy peat because of brain conditioning rather than soil conditioning. He started a campaign for peat-free growing which is still going on. Nowadays we have many more facts and figures to back up the reasons for not using peat, but still we have nowhere near reached the Government target, set in 1999, of composts being 90% peat-free by 2010.

A recent DEFRA White Paper sets a “voluntary phase-out target” of 2020 on peat usage for amateur gardeners, but unless those amateur gardeners drive demand for peat-free growing media, Industry will be in no hurry to comply, as peat is both cheap and easy to obtain.



(© Garden Organic campaign)

Yes, I'm afraid we domestic gardeners use ⅓ of the peat extracted, mostly in multi-purpose compost. Even John Innes composts, which we think of as loam-based, contain a certain amount of peat.

Why do we think peat is so good? Because it is a very consistent medium for growing plants. It has the capacity to hold onto water and dissolved nutrients to just the right degree, letting go of excess when required. Now that nearly all of us have a car, it is very convenient for us to buy ready-made growing media; and convenient for the manufacturers to dig up and sell back to us something that, as a natural resource, we all own anyway!

It wasn't always like this. Peat has only been used widely since the mid-Seventies. Until then, gardeners either made their own composts, or bought ready-made media with loam doing the job of peat. However, making one's own media takes effort; and making loam, from rotted-down turf, takes time – and to Industry, time is money.

Why should we consider doing without peat? It develops very slowly, at the rate of one millimetre a year in active bogs. Our lowland peat has taken thousands of years to accumulate from partly-decayed plants and fungi. Peat deposits form beautiful landscapes which support an especially rich biodiversity. By holding water, it lessens flood risk. It forms a carbon sink, and when we interfere and dig it up, thousands of tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) are released into the atmosphere (63,000 tons per year, more than equivalent to 300,000 cars, according to the RSPB in 2011). All but 6% of our lowland peat has gone, and we are still digging it up. We are also importing it from Ireland (60% of what we use) and the Baltic countries (8%).

What are the alternatives? Plants will grow quite happily in peat-free media. Coir, green waste and woody by-products are waste products of other industries, have a very low carbon footprint, and perform well in composts. For ericaceous plants, Vital Earth have a special peat-free compost; or composted bracken, pine bark and pine needles can be used in a home-made compost. Home-made! There's a thought. Celebrity gardeners from Percy Thrower and Geoff Hamilton to Monty Don and Carol Klein have all been seen on TV mixing their own composts. We may not all stretch to the huge vats of raw materials that they have, but most gardeners can use a compost bin, collect leaves, and even rot down a pile of turves. Various combinations of garden compost, leaf mould, loam, vermiculite and grit will produce media for all types of growing.

Several ready-made multipurpose peat-free composts are available. New Horizon and Carbon Gold have a range. For ericaceous plants, Vital Earth, Gower Commons, New Forest Bracken Products and Mendips have media. Carbon Gold is still developing products (executive chairman is Craig Sams, late of Green & Black's chocolate) using charcoal or biochar derived from biomass (waste biological material such as wood waste), blended with coir, to mimic the lignin found in peat, with apparently very promising results.

(Source: Mark Diacono, Daily Telegraph, Saturday June 11th 2011)

Garden Organic (formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Association, HDRA) is running a campaign to have peat banned from use in horticulture. To find out more, and possibly make a donation or sign their petition, see www.gardenorganic.org.uk/peat or phone 02476 308 210

The Hut stocks a range of growing media, including Vital Earth organic and peat-free soil improver, vermiculite and grit. If you feel we should stock a wider range of peat-free products, please speak to our Trading Secretary, Eveline Cragg! *(Details on p16)*

Val Hunn

Talk: A YEAR IN MY GARDEN

By Tony Kane, 22nd June 2011

It was reassuring to have a good attendance for this talk, as we had to move at short notice to the small hall behind St Luke's Church.

Tony Kane lives in Shirley in a house built in 1923, and has been working and photographing his large suburban garden – 35 x 230 feet – for over thirty years. He uses a 35mm Nikon camera, with close focus capabilities, and is emphatically not digital!

Over the years he has changed the garden in an unplanned way, but has organised it for colour – he has something in flower every day of the year.

In the early days, the garden was full of trees, which he has cut back to give a wild, grassy area bordered by shrubs and trees. The greenhouse enables him to bring on plants in time for their best season.

His slides were arranged in a seasonal way, with a selection of views and plants from each time of year.

In winter, cardoons and phlomis had caps of snow. Pink schizostylis is clearly able to survive snow! A skeletal honesty was rimmed with frost, as was a pink azalea and red cotoneaster. Cyclamen leaves peeped through the snow.

As spring manifested itself, pink hardy cyclamen flowered. *Clematis cirrhosa* and witch hazel, both sweet-smelling, bloomed. *Iris unguicularis*, about a foot high, flowered, as did snowdrops. A rhubarb leaf unfurled, followed by a rash of crocuses, camellias, tulips, daffodils, hellebores, forsythia,

primroses, polyanthus, wallflowers. Tony's garden must be truly beautiful in spring!

The season changed gradually into summer, via bluebells, azaleas, roses clambering on a pergola; dead nettle, coltsfoot and daisies gave homage to the wild side. Even the bindweed has lovely flowers – shame about the roots! Wild creatures came into view – a leaf-cutter bee carried its neatly-severed piece of rose leaf into a hole in a post; dragonflies emerged from the pond; thrushes have nested in the hedge, and robins in the greenhouse, shed, and flowerpot rack. Many varieties of clematis adorn the garden, with roses, poppies, periwinkle, geranium, delphinium, hemerocallis, dierama, hosta – the list is endless!

In autumn, teasel seedheads tempt the finches by the pond; *Cyclamen hederifolium* flowers. Cardoons, agapanthus, phlomis all seed – some seedheads germinating on the plant. Various fungi pop up on dead wood. The autumn colours of berberis, hazel, prostrate cotoneaster, *Geranium macrorrhizum*, cotinus, leave us in no doubt as to the season. The dramatic seedheads of *Iris foetidus* stand out in the borders, and the dangling seeds of dierama edge the pond; then begins the slow descent into winter again, with frost on the oak leaves and spider webs.

We felt we had almost been physically to this garden. Tony does open it occasionally for local charities – we must ask him to keep us informed!

Val Hunn/Betty Cox

"THE NATURAL CHOICE" - WHITE PAPER ON THE ENVIRONMENT

This is the first White Paper on the environment for 20 years, and is asking everyone – from individuals to businesses – to help nature flourish, aiming "to repair damage done to the environment in the past".

Measures include a £7.5M fund for rural and urban Nature Improvement Areas; larger sites for wildlife; new ways to help developers preserve wildlife sites; and encouraging children to learn outdoors.

Caroline Spelman, the Environment Secretary, said, ".....we are now all able to see the terrible price we would pay if we lost what we have or neglected to care for it."

To prepare for what promises to bring about the biggest change in the countryside since the Agricultural Revolution, a huge stocktaking has taken place. It concluded that a third of the vital services provided by nature – such as pollination, clean water supplies and the provision of topsoil (which takes a century to form just one centimetre) – are diminishing. The survey valued pollinators to be worth £430M a year to British agriculture, and wetlands £1.5M for their contribution to water quality. As a result, it has been decided, for example, that farmers will be paid for practices that protect water supplies.

However, the Natural Capital Committee is not a statutory body, and much of the White Paper seems to be contrary to changes proposed for the planning system. So we will have to hope that sensible debate in Parliament will bring about the best compromises for all – people and wildlife. Fingers crossed!

(Sources: Waitrose Weekend 16th June 2011; Geoffrey Lean, Daily Telegraph, 18th June 2011)

PENSHURST PLACE and GARDENS

Talk: by Head Gardener Cory Furness, 27th April 2011; Coach outing: 9th July 2011



The house, beyond the herbaceous border

We have been very fortunate this year, as we have been able to visit Penshurst Place for a whole day, armed with knowledge imparted to us in advance by the head gardener.

Cory Furness, a charming young New Zealander, has been at Penshurst for four years, and is one of only nine head gardeners there in the last four hundred years. With the help of an impressive collection of slides, he outlined the garden's history and development from one of Henry VIII's hunting lodges to its ownership by the present Viscount De L'Isle.

However, Penshurst's history goes back even further than that feisty king – to around 1341, when the building ordered by Sir John de Pulteney was finished, built in local sandstone – two wings, joined by an enormous and magnificent central great hall, 62x39 feet, and 60 feet high. Now known as the Baron's Hall, this is considered to be the best-preserved example of 14th century domestic architecture in England. It is indeed magnificent, with its stone floor, octagonal central hearth (alas, no fire on the day of our visit) and contemporary trestle tables, each over 20 feet long. The roof is a huge span of chestnut braces, each supported by life-size carved wooden figures. Earliest records of the garden are dated 1346, but most is of later, Tudor design.

The house passed from Pulteney, a wealthy merchant who financed Edward III, to Sir John Devereux, who surrounded the estate with a huge defensive wall – this is long gone, but its outline can be detected in the garden's layout. Around 1430, Henry III's son, John, Duke of Bedford, owned Penshurst, and built a splendid second hall, the Buckingham Building. The house passed to the Stafford family, the Dukes of Buckingham, and in 1519 Henry VIII visited. He cannot have been impressed, as he later had his erstwhile host beheaded for treason, and the house was forfeited to the Crown. It was looked after by Anne Boleyn's brother – Henry stayed at Penshurst while courting Anne at nearby Hever Castle. Henry's successor, Edward VI, gave the house to Sir William Sidney in 1552, and 450 years later the house is still in his family's ownership.

Sir Henry Sidney inherited in 1554, and it is to him that Penshurst owes the design of the gardens that we see today. He wanted a garden befitting the huge scale of the existing buildings, walls and towers, but in 16th century style. To do this he had to flatten out the land in front of the house, having thousands of tons of earth shifted, and building an ingenious system of walls and terraces, with fruit and vegetable gardens at a lower level. This work has remained virtually unaltered for 400 years.

Penshurst continued to be handed down the Sidney line (including the famous knight and poet, Sir Philip Sidney, killed in battle in 1585 aged only 31), with successive generations making additions and alterations to the house, but very little change to the gardens. The Sidneys became Viscounts De L'Isle, and Earls of Leicester, in the 17th century. The small square of houses at Penshurst's entrance is the original Leicester Square – the name was carried up to central London in the 1630s, when Leicester House was built, on the site of the now well-known Leicester Square. The estate passed down the intervening centuries in the same family, sometimes stepping sideways in the female line, once or twice being rescued from near ruin. The owners became Barons of Penshurst, and in 1835, Barons De L'Isle and Dudley.



The Sidney porcupine

In 1945 William, 6th Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, fresh from action in the Second World War, took over, and had to revive a house in a dire state – unoccupied for the winter of 1944-5, damaged by doodlebugs, damp and with a fractured main drain! The gardens had become a wilderness. William and his wife Jacqueline struggled for years, but eventually succeeded in restoring both house and gardens to what we see today. The gardens took 40 years to reach their present condition. In 1991 Philip, the present Lord De L'Isle, succeeded to the title and the estate. He and his family live at Penshurst, and run it in a very hands-on manner. In particular, Isobel, Viscountess De L'Isle, is responsible for the gardens, and works closely with her head gardener.



The heraldic garden

In his talk, Cory conducted us around the walled gardens, which cover 11 acres of the 48 acres open to the public. The gardens are laid out in the Elizabethan “room” style, and include: the rose garden – on our visit, pink roses were surrounded by low hedges of bronze-red clipped berberis or lavender, and mature apple and pear trees edged the garden; the Spring and Autumn garden is an heraldic garden – coloured poles are surmounted by heraldic beasts, representing branches of the family line (much as at Hampton Court), underplanted with twisting, interlinked box parterres of lavender; the Italian parterre, the structure of which was present in Elizabeth I’s time - an oval lily pond with carp, surrounded by beds of pink roses edged with clipped box hedges; the blue and yellow border in front of the house, including lilies, buddleia, and nepeta, is planted in the family colours. Cory had told us that a lot of heraldry and symbolism were used in the garden, such as the blue and yellow colours, broad arrows cut into the walls, a topiary bear and ragged staff (Earl of Warwick’s sign) and the Sidney porcupine statue.

One of Cory’s main projects has been the complete rebuilding of the famous 72m long herbaceous border. Running on either side of the pathway from the garden gate to the house, this was backed by apple trees, many of which had died over the years, the planting had been invaded by pernicious weeds, acanthus and solidago, and the soil needed enrichment. The only answer was to dig the whole thing out and start again, and this has been done over the last two years. The new borders are designed by George Carter, and have apple trees of long seasonal interest and evergreens, backing a series of separate bays, interspersed with lawns and seats. Beds of long drifts of colour are used to enhance the perspective – reds nearer the house, running through orange, pink, and lavender to blues at the gate end. The apple trees, many of which are old varieties, will be trained into goblet shapes, and the apple colours will match the flower colours. Plants include *Iris sibirica*, *Chrysanthemum* ‘Paul Bossier’, forget-me-not, and geraniums, all sourced as locally as possible. We sat on the stone benches and were very pleased by the new look, albeit still in its infancy – it should be superb in a couple of years’ time!



Lambethans relax on a new stone seat, herbaceous border

There are eight bodies of water, including ponds, trout lakes, and Diana’s Bath – originally a stew pond, a catchment pond where carp and tench were stored to clean out the muddy taste. It is now a large lily pond with ornamental carp. Over a mile of yew and other hedges, such as box and hornbeam, need clipping. The oldest resident is the Sidney Oak, way out in the park. Thought to be 1000-1200 years old, it is among the top 100 most significant trees in the country. There are ancient sweet chestnuts – one is 600 years old - and a “bee tree” which has an active nest of bees in it.

There are many other garden rooms, orchards and wild areas, as well as the village and the church – even with a whole day we couldn’t do it all justice.

Brendan, can we go again in a year or two, please?

Val Hunn

SPRING INTO ACTION!

Have you ever wondered about Knights Hill Wood – that tree-filled area that you pass on the way to The Hut, on the corner of Knights Hill and Lakeview Road? Is it just a fenced-off home for foxes and litter – or does anything go on there? Well, this summer, a lot will be going on there. John Cannell, of Embrace Social Enterprises, has drawn our attention to a series of free activities for children and adults, called “Spring into Action”, which will be happening in the wood or in local schools. The following is a summary of events – more details can be found on their website.

Community Nature Conservation /Environmental Education Project in Lambeth

Embrace Social Enterprises Ltd has been awarded a £8,638 Big Lottery Community Wildlife grant to run a 3-month nature conservation/environmental education project in Lambeth focusing on Knights Hill Wood.

We aim to run a total of 15 nature conservation sessions. Some events will take place in Knights Hill Wood which has been managed by Lambeth Parks & Greenspaces since 2002. There is an intention to declare the wood as a Local Nature Reserve in the near future. Other project activities will take place in school grounds which are close to the wood.

The project activities will be a combination of environmental education and practical nature conservation activities. The project activities will include nature surveys and working with school students to design and develop wildlife areas in school grounds.

Aims:

1) To teach practical and social skills: We aim to run at least 5 practical conservation events (10 – 18 people per event) which will be open to the public. To encourage participation from local black and ethnic minority adults we will target specifically black and ethnic minority groups, supporting them in participating in practical &/or environmental educational activities. The practical events will involve habitat maintenance/enhancement events. All events will either enhance/maintain biodiversity in a practical way &/or increase people’s knowledge of a local nature site plus the issues affecting it.

2) Workshops for young people: We aim to involve local young people in 10 tailor-made workshops (10-20 people/ event) running two types environmental education & practical nature activities. In order to attract a diverse range of youngsters we will work with local schools, youth groups and colleges. These diverse young people will take part in environmental education tailor-made activities on the sites. Plus help develop new wildlife areas on both sites.

Project Public Events (all at Knights Hill Wood, Lambeth)

**1pm to 2:30pm Saturday 20th August 2011 – Knights Hill Ramble – walk looking at
Tivoli Park & Knights Hill Wood**

1pm to 4pm Saturday 27th August 2011 – Bramble Bashing

1pm to 4pm Saturday 3rd September – Ivy Eradication

1pm to 4pm Saturday 10th September – Stag Beetle Habitat Creation

1pm to 4pm Saturday 17th September – Invasive Species Removal

For more information about these activities and the local area, please see:

Embrace Co-operation website: www.myembrace.org

Environmental projects website: www.embraceenvironment.wordpress.com

Photography projects website: www.embracephotography.wordpress.com

Embrace workshops website: www.embraceworkshops.com

Dates for 2011

- August 24th **Talk: The Lost World (Postponed from November 2010)** Dr Peter Brandham (ex-Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) *takes us on a 100-mile walk in the tropical rainforest of Guyana to seek exotic and curious plants.*
In St. Luke's Church, opposite Nettlefold Hall.
- September 3rd **LHS Summer Show (St. Luke's Church, Saturday, open to the public 2-5pm)**
- September 28th **Talk: Auriculas** Bill Lockyer, assisted by Colin Jones. *Bill grows a vast number and variety of auriculas, and has been the only amateur exhibitor at Chelsea for many years.*
- October 26th **LHS Prize-giving and Social** (probably Nettlefold Hall, but check venue beforehand).
- November 23rd **Talk: Introducing the New Leaf Project** Vinnie O'Connell, plant historian and professional gardener, *will tell us about his project at West Dulwich Station. He is developing a timeline of the history of plants, and giving young people the chance to work with him and learn gardening skills.*

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

All events usually take place in the Nettlefold Hall at the West Norwood Library Centre at 8.00pm (doors open 7.30pm) BUT PLEASE BE AWARE THIS VENUE MAY CHANGE PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE OR RING SECRETARY NEAR THE TIME

Entry is free and non-members are welcome!

AND THE NEW HEAD GARDENER AT GIVERNY IS – FROM MERSEYSIDE!

Many of our members have been to the famous gardens created by Claude Monet at Giverny, not far from Paris – and those who haven't been, really should consider it – as it is a beautiful place, despite the 531,000 visitors who go there every year. It's best to get there early! The gardens straddle the road, with Monet's house and flower garden on one side, and the lily ponds on the other. The village of Giverny is lovely, with galleries and other gardens, restaurants, cafes and a very interesting church. But it is Monet's garden which draws the visitors, who have been inspired by his wonderful, enormous Impressionist paintings of the lily ponds, now housed in the Orangerie in Paris. The garden is so quintessentially French, with a troop of gardeners who spend hours daily just cleaning the lily ponds, and the Clos Normand flower garden with planting in straight lines with blocks of colour, that it is remarkable that the new Head Gardener, who took up his post in June this year, is an Englishman, James Priest, from Maghull near Liverpool. However, he is well-acquainted with the French way of gardening, having spent much of his career working as a garden designer in France. Now 53, he is looking forward to maintaining the 38 beds of the Clos Normand, as well as the other planting and the lily ponds. To keep faith with Monet's vision, there are guidelines governing which colours can be used in the planting, but James will not find this restricting. 'It's like saying, "Here's your canvas, these are your colours – now you have to paint the picture."' It would be impossible to recreate Monet's planting, because he did not keep any plans or records of his garden, apart from his paintings. James describes it as 'An impression of an Impressionist's garden.....Monet planted the garden to paint. And now we've used his paintings to plant the garden.'

(Source: Jane Fryer, Daily Mail, Saturday May 14th 2011)

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 3rd September

– Summer Show (2pm, PLEASE CHECK VENUE)

Last day open before Christmas – Sunday 11th December 2011

Spring reopening – Saturday 11th February 2012



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

LHS Website address: www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

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