



# NEWSLETTER

Issue 75

Spring 2012



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## EDITORIAL

Here we are in the middle of one of those funny winters – mostly warm, with bursts of cold, such as the weekend we are just heading into as I write.

I fear that all sorts of insects and bugs will be surviving in the garden, and that plants and birds will think spring is far too early. All kinds of leaves are up in the garden, mostly alliums and tulips; the narcissi in pots are well on the way, and are in bloom further down the road; the allotment looks like a foxglove farm, and the garlic is well up. Time to get the broad beans into the root-trainers – in fact, urgent now! The birds are all eating their heads off on our feeders; perhaps they know worse weather is yet to come. I keep tossing sunflower hearts across the garden, to encourage the birds to eat up any insects under the leaves. Well, in the words of Doris Day, *Que sera, sera!* Keep calm and study the weather reports for frost; be ready with the fleece.

The LHS had a very enjoyable year in 2011, with the coach outings and open gardens well attended – see inside for reports. The Open Gardens team are taking a year off in 2012, but will be back in 2013 better than ever – if you feel inclined to open, please get in touch!

Despite the unexpected change of venue to St Luke’s Church, owing to theft of some of the Nettlefold Hall’s roofing, the talks and shows have carried on as ever, and the church has proved to be a very convenient home for us. The tea bar is especially handy, as everything can be held in the same room. We are continuing there for the foreseeable future.

Our old friend Linda Phillips, of Roots and Shoots, was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours list. I’m sure we all agree that this is well-deserved! Read the summary of her most recent talk to us inside on p7.

It may surprise you to know – it did me – that we are not the only Lambeth Horticultural Society! In early December we were contacted by Gail Dimson, Director of the Lambeth Horticultural Society of London, Ontario, Canada. Imagine the homesick south Londoners who colonised that area back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century! Their society started out as the Lambeth Ladies Gardening Club in 1954-5, and changed to its present name in 1975, so they are a few years younger than us. They too have talks and garden visits, and seem to be having an unusually warm winter! We have not yet been able to discuss this in Committee, but I hope we can find ways of keeping up a regular communication with them. I plan to send them our Newsletter, and they will send us their quarterly “hortigram”, which I hope we will be able to access via our website. Their website is: [www.lambethhort.com](http://www.lambethhort.com) and is well worth a look. More in the Summer issue! (Copy date 15<sup>th</sup> April)

Happy gardening!

Val Hunn

## LAMBETH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY COACH OUTINGS 2012

With this newsletter you will receive our leaflet telling you about our outings for the coming months. We have had to play around with dates because of the Olympics which may prevent traffic getting in and out of London. For this reason, we have not included a garden visit for July, but have started our first outing in April. Bank holidays have also played a part, pushing dates further into the month.

Costs have been kept to a minimum as far as we reasonably can to survive. We are visiting two gardens with concessions, one National Trust and one English Heritage. Some of our members may have a membership that allows one to take one or two members in on their membership. This must be arranged when booking places for yourself and your friends; it will not be possible to do so on the day.

We hope you and your friends will be able to come on most of our outings, and those of you who have not been for some time because of other commitments will join us again.

*I hope to be able to arrange small outings during the weekdays to Buckingham Palace State Rooms and the gardens; Highgrove; Sarah Raven's garden with lunch; and Gravetye Manor, garden of the famous William Robinson. These gardens can only be booked by special arrangement. I arrange these as part of my other fund-raising events for the ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST which is my favourite charity. Please let me know if you are interested. I will put details in the Summer newsletter if there is space as I know there is a heavy contribution of news at that time.*

Please note my new email address; only a slight change, but important as I do not now receive emails on my old address.

Brendan Byrne [brendan.byrne1@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:brendan.byrne1@tiscali.co.uk)

**The following is a list of our LHS outings for 2012.**

**For details, please see the accompanying leaflet and booking form.**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2012 Cost £14**

RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012 Cost £35, NT members £30**

Chartwell, Westerham, Kent

Chart's Edge, Westerham, Kent

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012 Cost £22**

Salutation, The Secret Gardens, Sandwich, Kent

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2012 Cost £22, English Heritage members £17**

Aylett Nursery & Garden Centre, St Albans, Herts

Wrest Park, Silsoe, Luton, Beds

Please note: booking for these outings **IS ONLY ACCEPTED ON THE SOCIETY'S BOOKING FORM**, which forms part of the Coach Outings leaflet sent with this mailing. Members who receive electronic mailing will find that a booking form has been sent to them by email. The booking form is **NOT** available on the Society's website.

*If you would like to join us on any of these outings, but are not a member and hence have no booking form, please get in touch with Brendan so that he can put you on his waiting list. Or why not join the Society? It is very good value at only £5!*

### DAY GARDEN VISITS

LHS member Janine Wookey, who is also our local organiser for the *National Gardens Scheme*, is once again running a series of day garden tours, beginning in April. The visits are to raise funds for the NGS and the causes it espouses, in association with her organisation *Gardens Etc.*

For information/leaflet contact Janine Wookey: 4 Piermont Green, East Dulwich, London SE22 0LP

tel:+44(0)2086931015 mobile:+44(0)7711279636 j.wookey@btinternet.com [www.gardentoursetc.co.uk](http://www.gardentoursetc.co.uk)

[www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

**MEMBERSHIP NEWS and RENEWAL REMINDER**

As you know, your membership runs for one year from spring until the following spring, when membership must be renewed. The Spring Newsletter is the final one included in a year’s membership, and contains the renewal form, below.

You will see on the renewal form that you can choose to have your newsletter and other leaflets sent by post, or by email link and weblink (the thrice-yearly Newsletter is too big a file to be sent directly by email). Please indicate your choice for the coming year on the renewal form.

Another service run by our excellent webmaster Peter Day is the monthly reminder calendar, which lists LHS events for the coming month. If you would like to take advantage of this service, please email Peter at [newsletter@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

If, during the year, you would like to change the way you receive your paperwork, or, importantly, if you change your email address or your home address, please drop an email to:

Peter Day [webmaster@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk) Val Hunn [valerie.hunn@ntlworld.com](mailto:valerie.hunn@ntlworld.com)  
and to Rhiannon on: [secretary@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](mailto:secretary@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk) so that all mailing lists can be kept up to date.

**For most members this will be the last newsletter covered by your 2011 subscription.**

Membership is due for renewal from January 2012. You can do this by post (in which case please enclose a small stamped self-addressed envelope for your membership card);

or in person when The Hut reopens on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012, or at one of our talks.

The subscription, which entitles you to shop at The Hut and book onto our Coach Outings, is still excellent value at £5.00!

**PLEASE** be sure to use the form below when renewing.

✂.....

**LHS Membership Joining / Renewal 2012**

**I wish to join/renew my membership of the LHS (please indicate)**

**I enclose £5.00 cash/cheque (payable to LHS)**

**Title..... First name.....Surname.....**

**Address.....**

.....

**.....Postcode.....**

**Telephone.....Mobile.....**

**Email.....**

**\*If you would like to receive the newsletter and other leaflets ELECTRONICALLY, tick here .....**

**OR.....(please select only one option....)**

**\*If you would like to continue receiving the newsletter and other leaflets BY POST, tick here .....**

**If you are a couple at the same address paying a subscription each, would you like ONE or TWO newsletters by post? (Please circle)**

***Lambeth Horticultural Society (LHS) undertakes not to disclose your details to any third parties.  
The information provided here by you is for LHS use only.***

**Please return to: Rhiannon Harlow Smith, 32 Chatsworth Way, London SE27 9HN  
PLEASE ENCLOSE SMALL S.A.E. FOR MEMBERSHIP CARD**

## THE PHOENIX GARDEN IN CENTRAL LONDON

If ever you are in the Charing Cross Road area of Central London visiting Foyles Bookshop, the music shops, and the many theatres and selections of restaurants to choose from, take a little time out to visit the hidden Phoenix Garden.

This is a lovely garden which has been created by volunteers and also has a full time gardener to make sure it is maintained and kept up to scratch. It is open free of charge from dawn to dusk.

I can only describe it as an oasis hidden from the busy traffic in Charing Cross Road. It is best described as one's private garden which has loads of plants flowering throughout the year, but allowed to grow in their own fashion, untended and sprawling around, a lovely effect. I visited on New Year's Day with Antony Glaser and friends from my Riding Club. There were loads of plants still blooming including chrysanthemums and roses, a bit late, but they were there, and a few dahlias.

*You can find it at 21 Stacey Street, WC2H 8DG website [www.phoenixgarden.org](http://www.phoenixgarden.org)*

*There is a signpost near the Phoenix Theatre pointing to Phoenix Garden*

After your visit and if you wish to have a cheap meal or refreshments why not visit Gaby's Deli and Restaurant which is rough and ready, but serves delicious Mediterranean-style food. This eatery has been at No 30 Charing Cross Road since 1965, serving our now stars as students, but who still visit.

*Brendan Byrne*

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**Membership form for 2012 is on the other side**



## LHS OPEN GARDENS SCHEME 2011-12

After six very successful years of the LHS Open Gardens Scheme – yes, we started in 2006! – we have decided to have a sabbatical year in 2012. This is partly so that the team can reclaim their summer weekends, but mainly because of competition from all the country-wide events happening this year, especially the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In 2011 we showed five gardens, three of which were new to us. It was also a rather wet summer, but nobody's enthusiasm was dampened. Doreen Mackie opened her surprisingly large garden in Streatham for the third time – what a sport! We had two new gardens in Alleyn Road, both belonging to late-Victorian houses, but completely different in their styles, hosted by Amanda, Penny and William. Janine Wookey had the worst of the weather, which was a shame, as her garden which expands away behind her cottage in Peckham is really worth seeing – we'll try and persuade her to open again. Finally, Ann and Peter Shaw reopened the garden, which we have visited before, to show off the late David Shaw's huge collection of soft fruit, as well as the wildlife area, the meadow, tropical and vegetable gardens!

We are indebted to the garden owners and their helpers for all the hard work they have put in, both horticulturally and domestically. We all have lovely memories of tea and cakes partaken of in many a beautiful setting. Thanks also to those who come and visit the gardens – without you, the project would be worthless. As well as benefitting the LHS by £402, you have helped St Christopher's Hospice, the NGS, and the Gurkha Welfare Trust in 2011.



*Clockwise from top right: Peter, Ann and guest, Janine, William, Penny and Amanda, and Doreen (L) with guest.*

We intend to start again in 2013, which gives any members who would like to open an extra year in which to get ready! So, if you would like to open your garden for the benefit of members –and I've not known any garden opener who hasn't thoroughly enjoyed the occasion – get your plans together and start doing all those jobs which you've been putting off for ages – and get in touch with me! (Contact details on p15). We'd love to have you on the list for 2013.

*Val Hunn, Open Gardens Co-ordinator*

## LETTER FROM OUR NORTHERN CORRESPONDENT

Dear Friends,

As usual I find myself vowing to write this letter in October, which I consider to be the start of the gardening year, but also as usual I am late doing this so now it is coming up to Christmas and another year gone.

Since we all had a winter to remember I shall not mention it again except to say 2011 had a very late start. My gardening diary for January and February just has weather records and the words 'no gardening' day after day. At the end of February we paid a visit to Hodssock Priory where they have massive plantings of snowdrops in great sweeps, plus cyclamen and hellebores and the day was fine enough to enjoy the visit.

It was the beginning of March before I began getting seeds in, clearing up the garden and pruning some of the roses. The viburnum was in flower with snowdrops underneath and the pots of bulbs in the house and the greenhouse were doing fine. We nearly lost a biggish conifer following a windy night. It was uprooted and lying on the big bank from top to bottom. Originally a bonsai, it still had a very small root system so we hauled it upright, put in a big post and tied it in and as it is still there now looking healthy we must have caught it in time.

The "*Which?*" *Gardening* magazine had asked for gardeners who used their greenhouses all year round and I wrote offering ours and a photographer duly arrived in the first week of April. The picture appeared in the October issue as part of an article on greenhouses along with two other readers and their greenhouses.

There were some plants which did not survive the winter at all and some which suffered badly and all year we were cutting dead parts or whole plants out. We left quite a few things to see if they would rally but quite a few did not and my hardy fuchsias are all much smaller than they used to be.

Ken did his best on the veg. plot but the potatoes were best and seemed to like being in pots more than the open ground. We had some really wonderful weather in April and everything got going well. Unfortunately this was followed by months of wet, grey, chilly weather and most of the vegetables at best just hung on or gave up. By the time the weather perked up in late September the runner beans were only just flowering as were the tomatoes. Carrots, onions, broad beans and peas were well below par and only the apples and the garlic came in quantity. All the soft fruit gave up, so for the first time since I got the garden going

properly 15 years ago there were no strawberries, gooseberries, raspberries, loganberries or any currants to speak of. Even the quinces promised a very good crop but never ripened. Some plants seemed to thrive on the cool days; the perennial daisies have never been out of flower since the spring and the hardy geraniums have flowered for months. One small marigold plant in the bed on the drive is still in flower now, poking through the snow, and that started months ago. Ken and I listened in amazement to talk of drought; our hoses lay dormant all summer and the only things that got watered were the plants in the greenhouse and the pots and baskets on the terrace and even they didn't need it every day.

We have had our usual run-in with the mice - apart from eating all the bulbs they could get their greedy paws on in the winter and spring and again this autumn, and sampling the bar of soap in my kitchen, they have found a new game. I treated myself to a very nice set of wooden-handled hand tools from the RHS catalogue. When they arrived I put some on the table in the garage to use on the terrace and the rest were taken to the greenhouse at the other end of the garden. Two days later I went to hang up those in the garage only to find that mice had gnawed at the wooden handles. When I checked the ones in the greenhouse they had suffered the same fate. I wrote to Burgon and Ball (whose tools they were) to ask if they used linseed or some other vegetable oil on the handles but they said no. I think, like the baby in "Alice", they only do it to annoy!

The other 4-legged friend we had a brush with was somewhat bigger - one hot day (yes, we did have a few) one of the cows got into the garden, trampled through a flowerbed and luckily stopped at the water butt on the corner of the greenhouse where she had a drink before returning to the field. We only discovered this when we returned from a day out and went to water in the greenhouse. How she got up a bank and over a low wall whilst trampling a wire netting fence with a barbed wire top and then got back the same way must have been quite a feat. We filled the gap in the fence with the old garden seat which the cows then found very handy for scratching their heads on, but fortunately the farmer has since put in a new row of posts and barbed wire so with luck that was a one-off event!

It remains for Ken and me to wish you all an even better year in 2012.

*Audrey Luff, 9th December 2011*

## **Talk: ROOTS and SHOOTS by Linda Phillips, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

*Linda May Phillips, Founder and Director, Roots and Shoots Charity, Lambeth, London, was awarded a well-deserved MBE in the New Year Honours 2012 for Services to Young People. We would like to offer her our congratulations.*



*Linda Phillips*

IT and vocational areas, mainly horticulture and retail. Alongside this training, local schools are involved, and also the wider community as the site has become established as an important green space for urban biodiversity. Looking back through the archives, Linda remembered the walnut tree being planted in 1981. The progeny of this tree has been spread around the neighbourhood by squirrels, which cross the Kennington Road – on the crossing! The site had a good microclimate, but by 1983 there were still no plants – all the budget had gone on expensive conservation-area approved fencing. Plants were brought in by the staff themselves. In 1994 an English oak was planted by Kate Hoey, after a petition of 30,000 signatures was sent to John Major, in a plea for funding. It is now a big, beautiful tree.

As the garden changed and developed, so did the buildings. The three original buildings, including a derelict Victorian coach house and a single-storey wartime prefabricated building with a leaking roof, were demolished; various grants were obtained; and the new eco-building, made of larch, was completed in 2005. This has huge rainwater storage tanks under the paving, for flushing toilets and watering plants; solar panels to generate electricity for hot water and general use, the excess to be sold to the National Grid; and green roofs, planted with sedums. The concrete walls of the old building were ground up and used as a “brown roof” for mining bees and other insects to live in.

2002-3 saw fundraising and application for a regeneration grant – this was awarded, and used for the installation of drainage on the site, which used to flood.

Those who have been there will know how beautiful and extensive the garden is now, with beds and borders, ponds, fruit trees, amphibians, bees (wild and domesticated), dragonflies – if you haven’t visited, look out for the Open Days this year, and go along. There will be a spring event, “Science Day”, renamed “Frog Day”, around 21<sup>st</sup> March; beekeeping training “taster days” are very popular; the “Apple Day” happens in October.



*Roots and Shoots' new eco- building*

You can apply to visit – look at the website [www.rootsandshoots.org.uk](http://www.rootsandshoots.org.uk)  
Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London SE11 6DN 020 7587 1131

*Val Hunn*

### **BIG NEWS FROM THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (RHS)**

The RHS has begun a series of big changes to its own infrastructure, and to its four gardens. £18 million has been raised by granting a 999 year lease of the Lawrence Hall and Conference Centre to Westminster School. The RHS will continue to hold its four London flower shows there, and in the Lindley Hall. The Lindley Hall and Library will be redeveloped to create an open-plan library and exhibition gallery, improving access for everyone to the RHS’s collections. There will be an inner-city urban garden, offering space for workshops for schools, local residents, and gardening courses. Across the UK, Regional Centres will be formed at RHS gardens or in partnership with colleges and gardens. These would support Britain in Bloom, local gardening clubs, and the RHS Campaign for School Gardening. More is planned - for information see the RHS website, [www.RHS.org.uk](http://www.RHS.org.uk) or *The Garden* journal.

## A GREENER CRYSTAL PALACE

Crystal Palace is well on its way to becoming an official Transition Town. You might be asking: “what is a Transition Town?” Is that the thing where you have your own currency? Well, that certainly is a possibility. Brixton is one and has one, but there’s a lot more to it.

The idea of Transition Towns was set up by **Rob Hopkins**, a permaculture lecturer at Kinsale College of Further Education in Ireland. He’s concerned about climate change and something called “peak oil”. Experts believe the world’s oil supply is slowly dwindling. We’re not running out of oil but the rate at which it is being found and extracted is in decline. Our lives are hugely dependent on oil. I don’t drive so I used to naively think the price of oil didn’t affect me but it does, hugely. Farmers use oil for their tractors, and if they farm conventionally, they’re using it in the form of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers – all these things are oil-based. Plastic, too, is made from oil, as are most mainstream cosmetics and cleaning products.

Hopkins wanted to start an initiative to empower communities to start facing these problems before they fully set in. So, rather than waiting for a potential crisis to arrive, why not try to do things now that could help? A lot of things people can do are actually just better ways of living. Growing more food locally and naturally is one of them. It’s usually one of the first things Transition Towns sink their teeth into. This is certainly one of the things Crystal Palace Transition Town (CPTT) is ploughing ahead with.

Last year, we gained permission from Croydon Council to take over a section of Westow Park [behind The Secret Garden] as a community growing space. We’ve registered the site with Capital Growth, a charity set up to establish 2012 new growing spaces in London by the end of this year, and they’ve given us a £350 grant to get started. One of our ideas is to use the space to grow food for local restaurants and shops. We’d also like to grow things that we can take cuttings from to offer locals so they can reproduce the plants in their garden. Education is also part of our plan.

As the year goes on, we’ll be looking for more community growing spaces within Crystal Palace. We’re also keen to encourage aspiring gardeners. To do this, we’ve started “Plant and Rant” days where people with gardens can have a working team come over to give them a hand with heavy work. This helps novice gardeners learn, it aids those with gardens to make a start on larger projects and it gives people without a garden a chance to pick up a spade and get stuck in.

A few garden share projects have evolved this way.



*Rory & Rachel in Kalina’s garden*

Sharing seeds, plants and knowledge are also important. Last year we held a Skill Share Day. Alongside a baker and jewellery maker (we tried to get a candlestick maker), we had lots of garden-related stalls. Master Gardeners were there to show people how to sow seeds. Representatives from the Penge branch of Homebase offered plants for sale. The gardening correspondent for The Transmitter (the brilliant local magazine for Crystal Palace) showed people how to create beautiful seasonal window boxes. We also had someone demonstrating how to set up and manage a wormery.

This is just the beginning of lots of exciting things. Finding a source of local eggs, foraging walks and making local preserves to sell in local shops are just some of the exciting plans sketched out for the food future of Crystal Palace. Below are some dates for upcoming events. If you’re interested in getting involved or simply want to find out more, please do get in touch.

*Rachel de Thample*

Email: [rachel.dethample@abelandcole.co.uk](mailto:rachel.dethample@abelandcole.co.uk)

Author of *Less Meat, More Veg: The eco-friendly way to eat with more than 150 inspiring recipes* (Kyle Cathie; £16.99)

**CPTT UPCOMING EVENTS**

see: [www.crystalpalacetransitiontown.org](http://www.crystalpalacetransitiontown.org)

Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2012. 7.30pm (venue tbc – contact Rachel at the email above for an update)

**Food & Growing inaugural meeting** – this is a group that will be looking at how to make Crystal Palace more self-sufficient in food.

Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2012. 11am-2pm, outside Upper Norwood Sainsburys, 66 Westow Street, SE19 3RW

**Seed and Plant Exchange** - we'll be selling and swapping seeds to sow in spring, demonstrating how to sow and we'll have plants to swap or buy.

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**THE BRING AND BUY PLANT SALE**  
**or**  
**A MODERN FAIRY TALE**

*Every year, the Society holds a Bring and Buy Plant Sale over two weekends – this year it will be on 15/16<sup>th</sup> and 22/23<sup>rd</sup> April. But what is the history of this event? Gabrielle Garton Grimwood looks into the Hut's enchanted mirror as a modern fairy tale unfolds.*

Once upon a time, the Lambeth Horticultural Society held its annual plant sale. Its members turned out in force, bringing all the surplus plants from their gardens – plants they had too many of, plants they had grown tired of, plants which had outgrown their allotted space or seedlings which they would never have time or space to plant. Then these smiling, eager gardeners had a lovely time, buying each other's plants, swapping gardening tips and then taking their new treasures home to tend and nurture. Even those gardeners who had no spare plants to contribute came along to bag themselves a bargain. Choice plants – obviously well-suited to the growing conditions of Lambeth – were available for a fraction of their garden centre price. So, everyone was happy: the gardeners who had found new homes for their unwanted plants, the gardeners who had restocked their plots with new delights and, not least, the Society's Treasurer who totted up the day's takings, muttering all the while The Hut's ancient motto "use it or lose it".



But, over the years, something tragic happened to the Bring and Buy Plant Sale. It seemed that Fairy Apathy had cast a spell over it. Fewer members came to contribute their plants and fewer came to buy what was on offer, so the sale became a shadow of its former self. The plants on sale were often the same as those on sale the previous year, as it was the same few gardeners bringing along their offerings. The money raised for the Society dwindled, causing the Society's Chairman to reflect ruefully that, although The Hut is the lifeblood of the Society, it's beginning to look a little anaemic.

So, what's to be done? Can we break Fairy Apathy's spell? Let's hope so. Come along on 15/16<sup>th</sup> and 22/23<sup>rd</sup> April. If you can, bring a saleable plant – indoor or outdoor, nothing is too big or too small; but even if you have nothing to bring, please do still come along. Who knows what you might find?

*Gabrielle Garton Grimwood*

## LHS SUMMER SHOW: Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011

The weather was fine for our show this year, but entries overall were slightly down. We had an enforced change of venue to St Luke's Church, but thanks to Bob Tydeman and his team, the show tables were arranged towards the main door, and informal seating of sofas and low tables along the sides of the nave. Together with the very convenient tea bar, this made for a very pleasant and relaxed atmosphere. The previous Mayor of Lambeth, Chris Wellbelove, attended and seemed, as usual, to enjoy himself!

The range of entries were fairly astounding – it is amazing what high-quality fruit and veg are produced in Lambeth, a borough with a high buildings to gardens ratio, to say nothing of the handicrafts and the yummy domestic entries. The photographic section in particular is achieving a very high standard.



*A wonderful display of fruit is surrounded by a selection of prize-winning entries.*

The full list of prize winners can be seen on our website, [www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](http://www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

Thanks are due to: St Lukes Church for their hospitality and the space to hold our show, following the temporary closure of the Nettlefold Hall due to the copper roof having been stolen; Audrey and Ken Luff for sponsoring the class for any cut flowers; the judges Audrey Head, Olive Turner, Iris Smith, Bill Lockyer and Peter Schneider; Heather Forsdick for doing the finger food for judges and stewards; and the many helpers before, during and after the show.

Val Hunn

## PRIZE GIVING and SOCIAL: Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Once again we were in St Luke's Church for this convivial event. The Mayor of Lambeth was unable to come and present the prizes, so the stalwart Chris Wellbelove did the honours, cheerfully and graciously as ever. As can be seen from the array of prize winners below, the full complement of cups and prizes was awarded, the Banksian Medal being carried off by Mrs Mary Upstone!



*Josh receives his prize from Chris Wellbelove, surrounded by, clockwise from top twelve noon: Richard, Val, Sue, Bob, Eveline, Brendan, Dusty, Gabrielle, Geoff, Annie, Robert, Mary and Anna.*

Following the presentations, we had entertainment of a reasonably highbrow nature – Virginia and her son Josh played two sets of three piano duets; Rhiannon led the community singing of “Daisy”; Eveline sang Schubert’s “The Trout”, unaccompanied; and Sue Wallace, the organist from St James’s Church, sang and played the piano in a horticultural version of “All things bright and beautiful”, with all joining in the chorus.

After that, everyone needed liquid refreshment, provided by Val and Dot at the tea bar, with a variety of edibles, supplied by members, which we all enjoyed.

Then, as the grand finale, the raffle was drawn, bringing to a close a very enjoyable and convivial evening.

*Val Hunn*

## Talk: THE LOST WORLD

by Dr Peter Brandham, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011

This is the last time we will hear Dr Brandham, as he is retiring from the lecture circuit in February 2012, and his dramatic reliving of a trip to *The Lost World* did not disappoint us. The title is taken from a novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, set on a flat-topped mountain with vertical sides, where evolution had stood still, and was founded on fact. There are, however, mountains with flat tops and vertical sides where evolution has continued, but differently from the areas around them, and this is where Dr Brandham's expedition team of three went in the 1980s, to Mount Roraima. North of the Amazon basin lies The Guiana Shield; Mount Roraima (9094') is the highest of these mountains, and is the meeting point of Venezuela, Guiana and Brazil. In this region are incredible waterfalls, such as Angel Falls.

They arrived in the dry season, 95°F and very humid, and went upriver for three days, with only 5 hours of rain a day. (In the wet season – 15 hours a day). Pineapples were seen, and the rhinoceros beetle. Areas had been cleared in the rain forest around the villages, for crops. *Brocinia reducta*, a bromeliad, grew in the fallow areas. Insect-eating *Drosera montana*, and a helmet orchid *Catasetum discolor*, grew in the ground. On the third day tributaries were reached, the boats beached, three scientists, twelve Indians and the equipment were unloaded, and the boat went, promising to be back in three weeks. There was nobody else for 50 miles. On the journey to Mt Roraima, palms, liverworts, orchids, cycads, *Episcea* (a greenhouse plant in the UK), the bract plant *Alloplexus*, abounded. Ferns ranged from the largest in the world (40' tall) to minute *Xeropteris* (1" in length). Finally the mountain was reached. They climbed up to the lower plateau up a sheer rock face covered in vegetation, clinging to trees and plants. The trees were covered in slime, due to cloud or fog, and in the slime grew other plants, such as *Lycopodium* (fern/pine type), a small creeper with cones. The mountain peak is usually covered in cloud. On the plateau was an "elfin forest" of trees less than 5' tall; bromeliads, brocinias and many insect-eaters such as *Drosera* and pitcher plants; butterflies, birds, insects including hornets, scorpions and massive spiders, and monkeys abounded. After the three weeks, the party arrived back at the river to find – no boat. They had no food left, and no chance of walking out, so Dr Brandham took more photos while waiting to die! These included a bamboo clump 6' high, with around 500 stems, and a flower on top – a cane orchid, *Setralia stellephylla*. The boat came three days later.

Val Hunn

## Talk: THE NEW LEAF PROJECT

by Helen O'Connell, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011

Vinnie O'Connell was unable to give this talk, so his wife Helen, who works for Southwark Council in the Youth Offending Service and in mentoring, spoke in his stead.

New Leaf was founded in 2006, at West Dulwich Station. Vinnie is interested in botany and plant evolution, and wanted to show the path of phylogeny, using flowering plants. Helped by young people from Southwark doing Community Payback, he cleared the site by the walkway to the platforms. They work at the station every weekend, digging and planting, and have also created a wildlife area in Belair Park.

Helen explained to us that *phylogeny* is the history of the evolution of an animal or plant type. It helps to decide where in the evolutionary timeline a plant comes. The evolutionary tree shows common ancestry. Some interesting facts are thrown up - 99% of plant species are already extinct! 99% of all known animal species are smaller than bumble bees.

Helen ran through the history of plant classification, starting with Discorides, Theophrastus and Alexander the Great. Pliny the Elder wrote "Natural History". Hieronymus Bosch, a botanist, physician and Lutheran minister, introduced the modern, scientific world view. He described over 700 plants.

Classification was really used for medicinal purposes. Nicholas Culpeper introduced the *Doctrine of Signatures* where plants were used to cure afflictions which they resembled, eg the roots of Lesser Celandine (pilewort) were used to cure piles. Some of these cures are still used today!

Carl von Linné (Linnaeus) wrote the *System Naturae*, which introduced the binomial "genus and species" system of classification. DNA classification may replace all other systems, but the binomial system will stay.

Nowadays the race is on to discover all the species in the rain forest, before they become extinct.

After the tea break, Helen answered questions, and told us about the New Leaf shop, at West Dulwich Station, which sells second-hand books to help finance the project. Donations of plants and books are always welcome.

The young offenders who help out can be referred on to gardening training schemes, such as Roots and Shoots, or Southwark Council Nurseries. Gardening skills are taught, and some return to do volunteer work. Usually they are 16-17 year-olds sentenced to 3-6 hours or even up to 30 hours of unpaid work. Usually they work in groups of six, depending on the number of volunteer mentors. We found Helen to be a very inspiring speaker.

Val Hunn

**COACH OUTING: MOUNT EPHRAIM GARDENS and MARLE PLACE**  
**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**Mount Ephraim Gardens**, near Faversham in Kent, have been in the Dawes family for over 300 years, but have only been in their current form since 1910. The mansion, today used as a wedding venue, was built in 1870 on the site of the original 1695 house.

Mary and Bill Dawes restored the gardens from the early 1950s, after wartime neglect. Mary ran the gardens until her death in 2009, aged 93.



*The topiary garden*

The “MizMaze” is a memorial to her, as she was known as “Miz”. Now the gardens are tended by her daughter-in-law Lesley, with two full-time gardeners.

The 10-acre gardens are full of wonderful trees and shrubs, a topiary garden, a rose garden, surrounded by orchards and an arboretum. From the prominent site of the house, the views over parkland to the Swale and Thames estuaries are magnificent. On our visit the ornamental grasses and herbaceous perennials were in full glory. We followed the path down a steep slope beside a stream, with rock pools and herbaceous planting and lovely conifers, forming the Japanese rock and water garden. Walking by the lake, we could only marvel at the tranquillity of the setting.

Lunch was partaken of in the very pleasant restaurant and tea garden, reached by way of the rose and topiary gardens.



*The Japanese Bridge*



*Marle Place*

The inner person restored, we continued our journey to **Marle Place**, near Brenchley in the Weald of Kent. Probably built for an ironmaster in 1619, the house is timber framed, with a massive four-stack chimney, and has been much added to over the years. The gardens were laid out from 1890 to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the formal gardens had deteriorated by the time the present owners, Mr & Mrs Williams, took over in 1949. What was left of the trees was destroyed in the hurricane of 1987, but the large cedars on the main lawn were spared.

The present owners have relaid the formal gardens, which are

surrounded by old orchards and woodland, and planted over 7000 trees, mainly European indigenous species. Assisted by one or two gardeners, they have planted thousands of bulbs and roses; preserved and restored a Victorian gazebo, Edwardian rockery and Italianate walled garden; created a mosaic terrace and a woodland sculpture display; made water features and a potager kitchen garden, complete with chickens.

There is also a big emphasis on arts and crafts – the old workshops and sheds house a variety of artists and sculptors, and there is always an exhibition to be seen, with work for sale. When we visited, a big garden sculpture event was under way, which had attracted crowds of visitors, and certainly lent interest to our rambles.

We enjoyed our tea and delicious cakes in the big open-fronted tea shack, served by some charming teenagers.

A good place to visit on a future occasion!



*One of the many sculptures*

*Val Hunn*

## COACH OUTING TO HIGHGROVE 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Our outing for this trip began at Victoria Railway Station. We were a group of 25, and felt most fortunate that the estate is now allowing groups an opportunity to visit more than once in a lifetime. Considering the long distance, we were afforded a stop for lunch at Leigh Delamere West services, where the staff were particularly helpful. They had pleasant Cardiff accents. We passed through Tetbury; ideally the coach passengers had wished for a stopover, but there were no parking spaces available. They clearly had shopping eyes but they had a good view anyway. Westonbirt Arboretum is close to Highgrove and the driver drove slowly past it, so we could get a good view. It was interesting to see so many colours in the woodland. We had to arrive at a specified time for the security clearance, and the always welcoming reception staff.

I have already reported on a 2010 Coolings visit to Highgrove, so this article can be viewed as a seasonal update. As ever, one cannot but be impressed with the informative introduction by HRH in his DVD, which was shown in the lecture hall. He enthused about his garden, freeing the soul and mind. We saw immediate evidence of this where he had invited his 12 gardeners to have a free hand with individual topiary designs along the Walk. This gave the group novel ideas for their own designs of topiary.

As expected, nothing remains the same at Highgrove. The presentational "Wall of Gifts" had further evolved since the last visit, with an extra layer of sculptural and carving gifts from Shoreditch art students. The guide had also informed us that the most commented-upon statue was *Lady of the Woods*; her Neolithic proportions were very interpretative. The Guide was very keen to mention that the estate had received a bronze copy of the *Statue of Isis*, standing on a bed of Japanese moss. The original statue showcases at Hyde Park in London.

The walled Kitchen Garden, although in its last week opening to the public, was still eye-catching. Resplendent Golden Hornet crab apples hung from their branches, waiting to be bottled, either as jam or jelly, by the estate's enterprises in Tetbury. There were various vegetables and the Musselburgh leeks looked particularly tall and healthy; a feast for the kitchen. The festooned moss water fountain offered its comfort to the resident colony of black bees; again a perfect reminder of the steadfast organic principles being applied.

We saw two gardeners mechanically plant bulbs in the meadows, with a specially-commissioned digging implement for HRH Prince Charles. We needed no telling of the imminent arrival of the

grazing black sheep, as the meshed trees could be for no other purpose. We were reliably informed that 40,000 bulbs at a time can be planted in the meadows. The scope of vision for the meadows is immense. Only an informed tour guide can give the visitors the whole picture, so we were most fortunate.

The group could not believe they were outside the Prince's front door. The single Guernsey Lily (*Nerine sarniensis*) specimen, outside his front wall, bedazzled the visitors. I had not recalled it, since my last visit. Yonder, in the near horizon we noticed the Golden Column, rescued from Victoria Station, topped by a wonderful sculpture by Julian and Isabel Bannerman, Prince Charles's favourite designers. The rich history of Victoria yesteryear could not quite leave us. Before boarding the coach for home, we noticed a number of Aberdeen Angus cows grazing in the estate's fields. Close to where the coach parked we were greeted by very friendly Masham and Mule sheep, beyond the fencing. The more one visits Highgrove, the more one realises the scope of the place.

Thank you, Brendan, for arranging this visit.

*Antony Glaser*

## Talk: AURICULAS by Bill Lockyer 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011

We were fortunate to have Bill as judge for the flowers section of the Spring Show in 2011. Auriculas are his speciality, and he gave a wonderful talk, explaining that they originated in the mountains of Europe, first coming to England in the mid-1600s.

Kent held auricula festivals, which moved later to the Midlands, where the cooler climate enabled them to grow well. In the 1800s societies were formed in the North, Midlands and South, which still hold shows today.

Bill showed many different types: those with green, grey or white edges; fancies with multi-coloured petals; striped; doubles; alpine, and border; all in a vast array of colours. They grow best in free-draining compost in clay pots, but it is best to apply treatment to avoid vine weevil damage. The plants like a cool, airy position, and shading in summer.

We saw displays at Wisley and Harrogate, and the Chelsea display which won silver – a four tiered staging was topped by a gold picture frame, the plants in their clay pots standing along the rows. Bill has been the only amateur exhibitor at Chelsea for many years, and wears the traditional suit and bowler hat. After the show ends, unwanted plants are transferred to plastic pots and sold.

After the talk, we had a chance to buy a nerine or auricula, or seeds to grow our own.

*Betty Cox*

## Dates for 2012

- February 11th     **The Hut reopens** (Saturday and Sunday – see p16 for opening hours)
- March 28th       **Annual General Meeting** *If you have any questions for discussion, please send them to the Secretary beforehand, for inclusion in the agenda*
- March 31st       **LHS Spring Show** (Saturday – open to the public 2pm)
- April 25th       **Talk: Hardy Geraniums** Jacqueline Aviolet is an RHS Registered Speaker, and has run her own nursery in Kent for twenty-two years. She loves giving talks and likes to encourage all things botanical with humour. She will bring plants to sell.
- May 23rd         **Talk: "Behind the scenes" (*postponed from May 2011*)** Chris Smith (award-winning nurseryman) of Pennard Plants will give an inside peek at what makes the famous and not so famous flower shows tick! He may well bring plants to sell.
- June 27th        **Talk: The ornamental kitchen garden** Dr Janet Macdonald is interested in a wide range of historical subjects, and has published a book with this title. Ornate kitchen gardens - potagers - have a history dating back to the 15th century.
- July 25th         **Talk: Water gardening** Mr Hilary Newman (Lecturer and horticultural consultant) discusses many famous gardens both in the UK and abroad where water is a major feature.

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

***All talks start at 8.00pm (doors open 7.30pm) and finish at 10pm.***

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

***As the Nettlefold Hall is still undergoing repair it is likely that we shall continue to meet at St Luke's Church, Knights Hill, West Norwood, for the foreseeable future.***

***Please keep an eye on the website, and your ear to the ground, in case of changes!***

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## TRADING HUT

*Cedar Tree Close, Cedar Tree Grove (off Lakeview Road, Knight's Hill, London SE27)*

**Opening times: Saturday: 2.00pm – 4.30pm (last customer 4.15)**

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

The TRADING HUT reopens on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2012, when you will find it well-stocked with all your spring gardening needs.

On sale will be a wide variety of bulbs, some potted, ready for flowering, at keen prices and capable of being planted out later. These are sure to cheer us up after this extreme winter!

Many varieties of **SEED POTATO** will be in stock. Buy early while stocks last!

*First early – Foremost, Red Duke of York*

*Second early – Catriona, Charlotte, Vivaldi*

*Maincrop – Desiree, Kerr's Pink, Maxine, Rooster*

Also available is a new book, *The People's Potatoes*, by Alan Wilson, price £20.00.

In this book Alan explores the beauty and diversity of over 400 potato varieties, with the aim to get us all to grow, eat and understand this much loved vegetable.

## SALE DATES

**BRING & BUY SALE: 15/16<sup>th</sup>, 22/23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012**

Bring all those potted-up cuttings that you haven't got room for – and buy something that suits your space! Vegetable plants will be especially welcome.

**BEDDING PLANTS SALE: 6/7<sup>th</sup>, 13/14<sup>th</sup>, 20/21<sup>st</sup> May 2012**

Patio plants, vegetables, roses, tender perennials, annuals, hanging basket materials - everything you need to get the gardening year off to a flying start.

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***Would you like to VOLUNTEER at The Hut?***

The Hut is the Society's chief source of income, and is used by many members who take advantage of the competitive prices and wide range of stock. However, it only runs on the goodwill of its volunteer helpers – and we always need more!

If you would like to join the happy band of helpers at The Hut, for one day a month, one weekend a month, or any other permutation, please call in at the Hut, or contact our Trading Secretary, Eveline Cragg, on 020 8771 9212, or [enquiries@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk)

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Our Spring Show is on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March - see the enclosed Schedule - why not enter this time? You may find, in your house or garden, daffodils, narcissi, hyacinths, foliage plants, succulents and flowering shrubs, or you could plant up a trough - there are classes for all of these. Maybe you could make jam, or bake a cake? Don't forget the Spring Show photographic classes! You could win a prize! And it's all good fun.