

NEWSLETTER

Issue 67

Summer 2009



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Letter from the Chair

Dear Members,

Firstly, can I on behalf of the rest of the membership welcome any new members or those of you who have re-joined after a lapse of time; not as many as Norwich Union, but every one of you counts! It is great to have new members and we hope you will all continue to spread the word and get your friends, neighbours and family to join as well. I've always found that talking to people about their gardens is a great way of finding out about plants, gardens and techniques that work. One of our more mature members recently mentioned that growing purple foxgloves next to potatoes and tomatoes not only stimulates their growth but also protects them against fungal diseases. Fortunately you won't have to sit next to purple foxgloves to benefit from being a member and taking advantage of all our services and benefits, and remember, spreading the word helps us to become bigger and better.

Secondly, a huge "thank you" to all the members who have been able to visit the Trading Hut and make plenty of purchases since we opened in February. Since then we have hardly had a quiet weekend and I'm pleased to report that we have had an extremely good financial start to this year. So thank you for answering the last "rallying call", as someone remarked to me, and supporting the Trading Hut in person as well as sometimes also bringing along a new member to stock up for the coming season. We are continuing to keep it well stocked and, as this Newsletter goes to press, we will be receiving our first delivery of bedding plants. We have been supplied by Dave with bedding plants for nearly fifteen years, and while he is not always the cheapest, the quality is always excellent. As we have no outdoor premises it is difficult for us to keep the plants from one weekend to another, so with negotiation we spread our deliveries over three to four weekends which means we can take orders that can be picked up the following week. Stock lists are available at the Trading Hut to help make up your order.

Once again we were treated to a brilliant display of spring flowers together with plants, floral art, handicrafts and domestic exhibits at our Spring Show in early April. The standard was very high and, considering the weather conditions in the early part of the year, it was amazing to see such a wonderful array of hyacinths, narcissi and tulips all at the same time. A big thank you to all of you who exhibited and equally importantly to Bob and the team for organising it once again so efficiently.

Our next big event is, of course, the Lambeth Country Show on the 18th and 19th July 2009. It is once again being organised by Lambeth Events and they have asked if we would participate again by assisting with the organisation of the Flower Show.

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

The Hut will be having its annual **BEDDING PLANTS SALE** on the weekends in **May**. This is your chance to stock up on tender plants for patios or hanging baskets, maybe roses or vegetables, or annuals to tuck into awkward spaces in the flowerbeds – but beware of late frosts – don't put them out too soon!

The **LHS Open Gardens** season starts on Sunday 24th May, when we can stroll once again in the lovely Victorian garden of Martin and Jane Cook in Leigham Court Road. On Sunday 31st May, we will be privileged to see a riot of colour in Diana Chadney's huge garden in Carver Road. For wildlife-gardening enthusiasts, on Sunday 7th June Kate Daly's pond, wildflower meadow, damp ditch and native-species hedge will be of great interest – and she has a lovely shady terrace for that cup of tea. For the first time we have an evening opening – the hosta fans Simon and Georgina Cooke will entertain us in Northstead Road from 6-9pm on Tuesday 9th June – whatever the weather! On Sunday 5th July we can see the long Victorian garden of Fran Rowe and Sandy Craig transformed by a modern formal design. We finish on an oriental note on Sunday 13th September, with the peaceful ponds, terraces, temple and exotic planting of Paul Brewer and Anne Rogerson in Chestnut Road. Remember – **only LHS members and their guests** can visit these private gardens - please bring your membership card with you.

Our ever-popular **LHS Garden Coach Outings**, organised by Brendan Byrne, also drive off in May – RHS Gardens, Wisley and Knowle Grange, Shere, Surrey on Saturday 23rd May; In Hampshire – Abbey Cottage, Itchen Abbas and Hinton Ampner, Bramdean, on Saturday 20th June; Knebworth House and Manor House Gardens, Stevington, Bedfordshire, on Saturday 11th July; and finally Ingatestone Hall and Wickham Place Farm, Essex, on 12th September. There are still seats to be had, but book up soon - and it is always worth checking with Brendan if you decide to go at the last minute, in case of cancellations.

The leaflets for the Coach Outings and the Open Gardens are available from Rhiannon, at The Hut or the talks. Contact details for both Rhiannon and Brendan can be found on page 16 of this newsletter.

Both the **Lambeth Country Show** (18/19th July, schedule enclosed with this Newsletter) and the **LHS Summer Show** (Saturday 5th September, schedule with the Autumn Newsletter, in August; or see the website nearer the time) are coming up in the next few months. It is always great fun to enter something in these shows. With the increasing interest in growing vegetables, we hope for bumper vegetable classes entries this year. The joy of amateur shows is that it doesn't matter if your stuff is not perfect – just getting it on the stand to swell the ranks is enjoyable in itself – if you win anything, that is a bonus!

For the photographers (or snappers) amongst you, the classes in the **Summer Show** are: "Rough and smooth" – 2 coloured prints; "Village scene" – 1 print; "Out and about" – 1 print.

If you are keen to win a prize here, the comments of the Photographic Classes judge at last year's Summer Show, which are on the website, will be worth a read!

www.lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

Good luck!

Val Hunn

MEMBER'S GARDEN OPEN FOR THE NGS

10a The Pavement, Chapel Road, West Norwood, SE27 0UN (Brendan Byrne)
will be open under the National Gardens Scheme on Sunday 26th July between 10am to 12 noon and 2pm to 6pm.

It is the smallest garden open under the scheme and is of particular interest to those with small spaces. It is filled with all types of plants including bedding, climbers, herbaceous, herbs and vegetables, mostly in containers.

Admission is £2. Share to local branch of the RSPCA

Talk: THE GARDEN AT ABBEY COTTAGE, ITCHEN ABBAS
By Col. Patrick Daniell, 22nd April 2009

While giving us a pictorial tour of his lovely garden, which we will be visiting on our June coach outing, Patrick Daniell evoked for us the whole history and development of Abbey Cottage and its garden.

The cottage was originally a “one up, one down” thatched gardener’s cottage, built into the walls of the kitchen garden belonging to the rectory, now Abbey House, in the early 18th century. Itchen Abbas takes its name from the Abbess of St Mary’s nunnery who owned land there in the 16th century. Col. Daniell bought the cottage in 1976, and was delighted to find that with it came the walled garden, and a large tract of extra land. The gardens were neglected and overgrown, with 45 large unkempt apple trees, loads of debris and ground elder, but also rhubarb, irises and paeonies which flourish today. He enlarged the cottage, and intended to create a new garden, while trying to preserve the atmosphere of the old.

In 1979 the Colonel was posted to Oman and put his plans on hold. He found a welcoming country, and was inspired by the mountains and scenery, and the judicious use of water for irrigation. He thought about his own garden, and designed it by drawing in the desert sands. On his return in 1982, he began the process of creating his own garden at Abbey Cottage.

By showing us “before” and “after” photos, he made us realise what a huge undertaking this was, and how fortunate that many friends and helpers had been able to lend a hand. On one occasion, he found a workman about to demolish the rustic village bus shelter, and replace it with a new one. The colonel not only “rescued” the shelter, but persuaded the workman to help him re-erect it in his garden!

The garden is surrounded by the original red-brick wall, divided internal walls and steps of flint and stone, and yew hedges. The lawns, orchards, vegetable gardens, shrubberies, pond, meadow, plantation and even compost heaps are all placed for maximum usefulness and impact – long grassy vistas have convenient seats for relaxation and appreciation of the surrounding planting, and focal points such as statues or urns draw the eye.

The garden has been fully organic since November 2000. By applying the principles of garden design, the Colonel has succeeded in his aims for the garden to be: in keeping with the countryside; easy to maintain; interesting somewhere at all times of year; united to the cottage; welcoming; not all seen at the same time, thus preserving the element of surprise.

I for one can’t wait to be surprised by this garden in June!

Val Hunn

Since the talk, Col. Daniell has let us know that the plant sale held during the evening raised £115 for Macmillan Cancer Care.

WANTED – VAN AND DRIVER!!

The “man and van” who usually assist at the time of the Lambeth Country Show are unfortunately not available this year, so we would be extremely grateful if any member with a van could help us out, or perhaps could put us in contact with a suitable friend!

The Show is on Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th July, in Brockwell Park, Herne Hill. The van is needed to transport necessities for the show from the Trading Hut to Brockwell Park on the Friday, 17th July, from about 4.00pm; and to ferry things back to The Hut after the show closes on Sunday 19th July, from about 5.00pm.

If anyone is able to help us out, please contact Rhiannon Harlow Smith (details on p16) for more information.

LHS SPRING SHOW - SATURDAY 4TH APRIL 2009

Award winners:

SHIELD for the BEST HORTICULTURAL EXHIBIT – **Robert McConnell** in the class 33: Vase of mixed flowering shrubs. His exhibit included magnolia, camellia, spirea, japonica, kerria, mahonia aquafolium and forsythia.

JOAN AXON SHIELD for the BEST FLORAL ART EXHIBIT – **Mrs Doris Woodeson** in class 52: "Easter Parade", a dual aspect exhibit incorporating an Easter bonnet set around with freesias, carnations and daffodils opposed by a creation of lilies, kerria, and an echo of the freesias, white carnations and daffodils.

CHEVIOT GARDENS AWARD for the BEST DOMESTIC EXHIBIT – **Bob Tydeman** in class 62: a wholemeal loaf of excellent quality.

LILY JEAL PLATE for MOST POINTS DOMESTIC SECTION – awarded to **Vera Hazzard** who pipped Michael Grimwood to the post. Both had six points. However, on count-back of first and second places, Vera held the day.

CUP for the BEST HANDICRAFTS EXHIBIT – **Mrs Doris Woodeson** in class 46: an exhibit of needlecraft: embroidery, smocking, tapestry or similar. Her exhibit was a ten by ten panel of words and picture celebrating the birth of Samuel Robert on Christmas Eve 2008.

CUP for the BEST CHILDREN'S EXHIBIT – **Francesca Garton-Adams** in class 43: she punished other entrants with her Easter card which inside had the entreaty "have an eggcellent Easter".



"Watership Down" by Brenda Wheeler

Various themes were popular this show. The most popular name was Margaret (Marchant, Day and Jackman), cats were the favourite subject of class 45 – a painting or drawing of an animal (Dot Cutbush and Virginia Pizzoferro) and I think we could match any society with our field of surnames including the letter "z" (Kokoszko, Hazzard and Pizzoferro). The entries in class 53 - "Watership Down", a petite exhibit, artificial plant material allowed - had a high skill and bunny count. 1st Brenda Wheeler – Grape hyacinths, kerria and spirea, 3 bunnies; 2nd Vera Hazzard - pansies, grape hyacinths and miniature daffodils, one bunny, and 3rd Gladys Halley - one bunny and bird.

A number of exhibits caught my eye: Stephen Mclean's model of a street seller, with barrow and garden tools for sale; Brendan Byrne's trough of miniature tulips, pansies, lemon thyme, mint and phlox; Vera Hazzard's five sticks of rhubarb; Glenn Wellman's three alpines- fritillary, pansy and primula; and Annie James's vase of mixed spring flowers, which if they had been mine I couldn't have borne to cut - hellebore, blue and white hyacinth, white and yellow daffs (I could have cut them!) and pulmonaria. Out of ten entries in class 60, a light fruit cake by R Harlow Smith prevailed over Vera Hazzard and Dot Yates. Ben Pizzoferro's collection of twenty-six cacti and succulents was a great achievement, and the men seem to have a strangle-hold on bread making - Philip Spedding, Michael Grimwood and Bob Tydeman.

The official count of entries was 203 and 40 entrants. Many thanks to our judges: Colin Jones (horticultural), Olive Turner (floral art), Iris Smith (domestic) and Audrey Head (handicrafts and children's).

Bob Tydeman

ARE YOU DIGGING FOR VICTORY?



It can't have escaped anyone's notice that there is a rapidly-increasing interest in home vegetable growing. No matter which of the media you are looking at, there will be something about growing tumbling tomatoes in a window-box, converting your lawn to a vegetable plot, or bemoaning the lack of allotment sites.

As a home gardener and fairly new allotment holder, I can only approve and wonder at this trend. It has to be good, doesn't it? Growing your own edibles takes some of the load off the economy, as not so much food needs to be imported. Food transport miles are reduced, thus producing less greenhouse gas. Home-grown food contains fewer toxic chemicals and more vitamins and minerals, and so is healthier, and tastes better. Composting garden and food waste reduces the rotting in landfill sites (which produces more noxious gases), and

leaves a useful end-product. Healthy exercise in the fresh air is beneficial both physically and mentally. One's carbon footprint must be positively glowing with virtue. But is any of this really true?

I thought I was doing wonderfully well until, by chance, I read Edwin Oxlade's article "So you think you're green?" in the October 2008 issue of *Kitchen Garden*. He points out that no matter what you do, you produce carbon dioxide (CO₂), and it is impossible for the layman to perform the complex calculations to establish a true carbon footprint. Composting produces CO₂, and possibly methane as well, which is supposed to be worse for global warming. Depending on how far away you are from your allotment, driving to it can emit just as much CO₂ as driving to the supermarket. So much CO₂ is moved around the Earth's atmosphere by green plants and other phenomena that on an individual basis "we might as well try to stem the tides by paddling in the sea".

I confess that I felt somewhat dispirited after reading this. Is all that digging really worth it? Should we just give up and let our governments lead us eventually to Soylent Green? I recalled doing Dick Strawbridge's (*It's not easy being green*) simple carbon footprint calculation, which showed that at best I needed 2.08 Earths to support my lifestyle – and that was LOW compared to most people. Mr Oxlade did say a couple of cheering things. He thinks that "importing fruit and vegetables we can grow perfectly well ourselves is just plain silly". I must agree with that; and during the two World wars, when our imports were virtually stopped by blockades of our fleet, that is just what we did, by Government decree and with amazing Government efficiency in releasing land and assisting growers. After the wars, a lot of land was returned to parks and playing fields, and vegetable growing slid inexorably back down the popularity charts. Perhaps now that we are facing a different, more insidious, enemy, cultivation is once again our secret weapon?

Mr Oxlade concludes, "What I do feel because I grow some of the food I eat is a greater closeness to nature. I guess we all feel that and, maybe, that's what being green is all about". Well, that is very nice, but a bit flabby. Perhaps Matt Adams, in his Editorial in *Moving Beyond Organic* (www.goodgardeners.org.uk), Spring Issue 2009, can give this philosophy a rather more scientific and pertinent meaning. He states that the world plan for a sustainable economy mooted at the first World Earth Summit in 1992, with no care for biodiversity, is not working well at all; economies and biodiversity are in a parlous state. He thinks that before recovery can occur, we must value and connect strongly with all the life we come into contact with, human and other. As gardeners, we are in a good position to do this, working from the soil life upwards. We can learn from the micro-life of the soil that all life is based on co-operation. We, "as gardeners working with the soil...have the potential to promote a new view of nature and, who knows, maybe a more sustainable form of economics will follow".

So maybe it IS worth making the effort, and not just for our own benefit. Keep on digging! (Or dig once, and then go no-dig – much less tiring, and much better for the soil). Go organic! Build a pond! Love toads! Don't cut your grass so often! Grow flowers for pollinating insects! And maybe the butterflies which flap their wings in our nectar-rich gardens will cause a tornado of hope around the world.

So, if you are still keen to grow some of your own food, but haven't the space for it, where can you go? There are several schemes in operation which unite the landless with land, and beginners with those with knowledge and experience.

The most well-organised set-up so far seems to be Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's Landshare scheme (www.landshare.net), run in partnership with Channel 4. This is a register of people with land to spare, and people who need land, so that they can be matched up. It also invites people with skills to register, so that they can help beginners. More than 22,000 people have so far signed up (*Daily Telegraph*, 3rd Feb 2009), and there are registrations from every postcode in the UK. Launch was due over Easter.

Of course, many people are already garden-sharing, on a formal basis through organisations, or an informal basis between friends or neighbours. The various Transition Towns make local produce a priority – have a look at :- www.totnes.transitionnetwork.org; www.incredible-edibletodmorden.com; Locally, www.dulwichgoinggreener.org.uk; www.transitiontownbrixton.org. In Okehampton, a local group, Growing Our Future, has acquired 16 sites in the town so that local people can grow their own food. Links to the town's schools ensure that children take an active part.

The National Trust, one of the UK's biggest landowners, is to make land available for allotments. All its sites are being asked to identify potential sites (*Daily Telegraph*, Jan 24th 2009). They are also launching a locally-grown food initiative, giving away seeds, planning to teach children gardening skills, and running foraging courses.

Next time you visit Sissinghurst, you will see signs of the return to mixed farming in the surrounding fields for which Adam Nicolson and his wife Sarah Raven have been pressing the National Trust. In a very entertaining TV series (*Sissinghurst*) and a well-written book (*Sissinghurst; an Unfinished History*. Harper Press), Adam recounts the 4-year struggle to bring his dream of the estate where he grew up being once more able to supply its own food from its own farm, to be served in the Granary Restaurant.

In London, the Women's Environmental network has re-started the allotments between tower blocks in Tower Hamlets, with a central compost system to which all flat-dwellers contribute. This impressed Rosie Boycott, Chair of the London Food Board, who is looking to create 2,000 new growing spaces in the city. In Southwark, the Tate Modern art gallery, with Bankside Open Spaces Trust, started a garden on waste ground in Webber Street, SE1. Now the Edible Estates community garden, it grows flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs, and has shown that the co-operation of local people is a force for good, as there is no problem with vandalism, and social interaction has increased hugely. (*The Garden*, Jan 2009).

British Waterways, in charge of 2,200 miles of rivers and canals, is considering making unused stretches of land available for allotments, and is already leasing land free in London for schools and community groups (*Daily Telegraph* 21st Feb 2009). Half the population of Britain lives within five miles of a waterway.

The BBC and Gardeners' World have just launched Dig In (bbc.co.uk/digin), providing free packets of easily-grown vegetable seeds, and showing how to grow them on the programme. Joe Swift (who lives a long way from his allotment) is continuing to review his own plot and those of his neighbours, with news of allotment gardening around the country.



A well-run allotment

So, for your own personal development's sake, the planet's sake, wildlife's sake, your local community's sake, or just because you enjoy it – try growing a few vegetables and enjoy eating them – it really is worth it! And who knows, we may just save the planet – eventually.

Val Hunn

INSIGHTS from a GARDENING BOOK



During Shakespeare's time it was said there be 'Four Ages of Man', and a painting by Valentin de Boulogne in 1629 depicts this as a male in infancy holding an empty bird trap, symbolising hope; another male in youth seen playing a lute, symbolising amorous desire; and in "thy manly age" (Manhood) he's shown in armour, wearing a victor's laurel wreath and also holding a plan of fortification. And by his prime age, there he is, being associated with a pile of coins, symbol of avarice, and the glass he holds symbolic of the fragility of life.

Save for the 'Wisdom of a Gardener' who goes beyond having just the *Four Ages of Man* to his credit, for in a hardback book called '*The Alternative Gardener*' by W. Rushton saying:

"...The youngest of the gardening ages is that of youth, stretching from one's late thirties, when man first becomes interested in gardening [and] the second age begins in the early sixties [as] the gardener now has more time on his hands. He therefore does far less work. Often he will do nothing at all. This is the age of maturity. The third age of gardening begins in the early seventies. The gardener will sit for long periods and reflect. He has time to collect his thoughts. In fact, by the time he has collected them there is often no time left for anything else. The fourth age being in the early eighties [because] the gardener now has time to collect together any thoughts he didn't have time to collect together previously. He will also have time to re-collect those thoughts he had collected once before but has now forgotten. He won't have time for gardening. He will be wrestling with his great book – '*The Collected Thoughts of an 80-year-old Gardener*'. [But] the fifth

age through to the seventh age of the gardener [will be the] twilight of his gardening career. He collects his thoughts together for one last time... then dies...though not always in that order..." which as a gardener is a better way to go, I'd presume, being a 'Female in the Womanhood Age'. But that's another article, (just got to find the paperback to go with it), as it would leave nothing but the tips and hints of pearly gardening wisdom behind and no-one can sit on thy laurel because it was fortified so well.

LIBRARIAN'S CHOICE:

In 1872 the plant *Dianthus* 'Mrs Sinkins' took the gardening world by storm and continued to increase in popularity for a long time, as it was, "...a really good 'doer', it makes compact, spreading clumps, and had endearingly ragged white blooms which are wonderfully scented..." This book is about the names of garden plants and it tells their stories, describing the people whose names they bear, and the link between them.

WHO DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? by Alex Pankhurst

***THIS BOOK IS AVAILABLE FOR A 2 WEEK LOAN
FROM THE LHS LIBRARY AT THE HUT.***

(GARDEN BOOK DONATIONS WELCOME)

Mavarine Du-Marie

LHS LIBRARY

The library is a free service for LHS members. It holds a wealth of knowledge with regards to gardening as there are around 500 book titles currently available for borrowing, and a selection of videos and magazines.



The library is open on Saturdays and Sundays at the same hours as the Trading Hut.

Books can be borrowed for two weeks. There is a catalogue that informs you what books are on the shelves, so just leave your details in the Membership Log Book that resides on the library table when you take out a book on loan.

If you can't get to visit the LHS Library but still require information from a specialist book or article, please get in touch.

Mavarine du-Marie
LHS Librarian
email: mavarine@aol.com

BONNINGTON SQUARE GARDENS, VAUXHALL

For those of you who like to visit gardens, parks or open spaces, Brendan Byrne provides four outstanding garden outings a season; Valerie Hunn organises outings to our own LHS members' gardens; but one can never get enough, and I am glad to recommend an inspired garden in our own Lambeth borough, at Vauxhall, SW8. This is Bonnington Square Gardens, that first came to my attention in a recent BBC Gardeners' World programme.

At a chance meeting with Joe Swift I learnt from him that a crowd of New Zealand residents started it off with the help of Dan Pearson, a renowned garden designer who lived locally at that time. The two separate gardens are situated 100 metres to the north of the historic Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. The continued spirit of this past

lives on today with the Paradise Project, whereby street gardens are encouraged in every neighbourhood space. The actual garden is open to a wider audience under the umbrella of the London Open Parks weekend on the 13-14th June, although the Residents Association do not lock the garden, which at night is even illuminated by uplighters and fairy lights.

The volunteers are very friendly and proud of their community garden. The smaller garden contains an historic industrial water wheel from the 1860s, rescued from a marble factory, as well as a "Helping Hand" statue. The main garden contains numerous perennials with a wild effect. Spring flowers and shrubs gave a country garden feel, that is so photographic. I counted daffodils, narcissus, tulips and hellebores which were mixed amongst the heaving naturalistic weeds. Most impressive was the yellow shrub Kerria. An atmospheric pond with water lilies maintains the country-like feel, which is all the more remarkable bearing in mind that the garden is based in Vauxhall, known more for Radio London traffic reports than for a top Six London Garden Rating as per the Evening Standard.



The Gardens

Photo: Antony Glaser

Just as I was leaving this delightful oasis, a local resident arrived on her bicycle with a huge basket of mixed herbs, and was delighted to have visitors. She said people in Vauxhall tend to go away for the weekend. A most delightful afternoon was spent there.

Antony Glaser

OUR PLOT AND ITS CREATURES

We are deprived! It's official!! We left Lambeth eleven years ago, and now live in a rather remote rural area, decreed by the County Authorities to be the most deprived in terms of amenities in Hampshire. We like being deprived. We love our dark, streetlampless nights, with the stars almost touching our shoulders, where you can walk safely home in the blackness without a torch. We like the little river which runs through our village, and feel proud of its cleanliness and diverse wildlife. This is in spite of the fact that we have no mains drainage, and process our own dirty water through cesspits, which run in a series of underground chambers down the garden. We don't have public transport either (well - except there are two buses a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, to take us to market in Salisbury. And I suppose if you miss the return journey, you might have to stay in Salisbury until the next Tuesday or Saturday?)

As a community, we still tend to make our own amusements, our Duck Race, Apple Day, Village Gardens Scheme, and Grand Summer Fair. And this often muddy way of life means that our gardens and the wildlife in them are more diverse than are yours in London. I don't mean that yours are inferior - perhaps with just less variety, because we, without really trying, naturally provide more habitats for wild plants and creatures,, both in cultivated and uncultivated areas.

For example, on our allotment, there is a little purplish snapdragon weed. It grows everywhere. It has come back home on our boots and on the wheelbarrow, and now it grows in the gravel of the drive, and in the garden beds. Naturalists came to survey the Village plants, and announced with excitement "We found weasel snout!". Photographs were sent to the then English Nature, and some visiting naturalists from Denmark came to view this rare flower. Which turned out to be me little purplish snapdragon on my allotment! At first, I felt very proud to have it, and left it to grow unweeded. But it went forth and multiplied, and soon our allotment became a weasel snout nature reserve. People came and took seed, and planted it in their gardens - but nothing came up. Weasel snout likes our allotment, and none other, - so now I grow a formal row of it,, and weed up the rest, and put it guiltily in the compost bin. It is one of those plants which used to be an agricultural weed. It will not thrive in set-aside, or by the roadside. Like poppies, the ground it grows in has to be regularly tilled - but why our allotment, and not even the one next door to it? Who knows!

But somebody did know about another of my discoveries - a beautiful green caterpillar marching

across the little bridge in the heart of the Village. We bore it home, and when looking at the arrangement of its legs, I decided it was a sawfly larva - but what a whopper! You wouldn't have wanted that on your gooseberries in any numbers!

I contacted a sawfly expert, and the conversation which followed still surprises me, even in hindsight.

John: Where did you find it?

Robin: Walking along on a wooden bridge.

John: Was there an alder tree nearby?

Robin: Yes

John: And was the alder tree next to a river?

Robin: Yes

John: And is the river a tributary to the Avon?

Robin: Yes.

John: Oh well, I know what that is then.

And so it was named: *Cimbex connatus* - the first record for Hampshire, and slowly spreading on alder trees abutting the Avon and its tributaries. Since then, it has started turning up in supermarket car parks, because they are commonly planted with alder trees!

There was a strange postscript to this. I published the glad tidings in our Village newsletter - an A4 sheet, circulated free of charge to our hundred-odd houses. And then got an e-mail query from the Natural History Museum in London, from a naturalist who had read about it?!!!

In our garden, there are plenty more insect discoveries - such as the butterfly the size of a duvet (well, almost!) which flew up the garden in a cloud of blue and purple. It proved to be a Camberwell Beauty - first recorded in Coldharbour Lane in Lambeth long, long ago - but now, although its appearance in Hampshire was noted, it was felt that it was probably an escapee from a butterfly farm somewhere or other. But others - Painted Ladies, different sorts of skippers, and various blue butterflies which I can't identify, are common - as are the humming-bird hawkmoths which shoot round our honeysuckle plants late in the summer, and hibernate in the greenhouse roof.

Sometimes a spotted flycatcher nests in the honeysuckle which grows against the house, but it is fussy, and the amount of pruning has to be just right to tempt it. Nowhere in London I think could I have leant out of the bedroom window and watched little spotted flycatchers in their nests! Nor would there be egrets perched in the willows and silver birches at the end of the garden, nor the roe deer that came up on to our patio, wary, but not too bothered about ourselves, watching with our mouths wide open!! Then there are the ducks nesting in the flower borders - mixed blessings are those. You can't weed there for three weeks, and the adults eat all our

ALEX SHOTKO 1925 - 2009

If you have been a member for a lengthy period of time or you have been a regular visitor to our shows or the Lambeth Country Show you will have met Alex Shotko.



Alex, along with his wife Ann, was passionate about houseplants and in particular cacti. Their exhibits lit up the show bench and although they were hard to beat it was always a treat to see their plants and learn how you could make your own exhibits better. So it was with great sadness that we heard in February that Alex had died after a short illness.

I'd known Alex for as long as I can remember. I know he was a member for over thirty years and had contributed to the general life of the Lambeth Horticultural Society. It was with great expectations that we would see Alex and Ann arrive and unload all the meticulously packed plants which had made the journey to the show. Each large plant had a box of its own with specially cut spaces which insulated the cactus plant against any possible damage. All the plants were colour-coded, so the process of placing them on the bench was carried out with extreme precision. It was explained to visitors that Ann had her plants and Alex his, so even within the family there was gentle rivalry. It quickly became evident he not only had a passion for cacti and succulents, but he was also willing to share it. He was always willing to give you tips on how you could grow plants to the impeccably high standards that he managed to aspire to. Not only did their cacti and succulents radiate health and perfection, but so did their houseplants. They managed to create the perfect situation for the plants to grow around their house. The air plants in the kitchen, ferns in the hall and African violets in the living room, each given space and requirements that were just right. Their small back garden was just as impeccable, even their small lawn was of bowling green standard and their collection of semper vivums were expertly cared for and enabled plenty of propagation to take place.

Alex had several careers which spanned his eighty-four years of life. He made his home in Britain after coming over from Belarus and took up several jobs in as a precision engineer, first with submarines and printing machines and then, due to the business relocating, he worked for a bespoke tailor in Savile Row.

Whenever possible Alex would offer to help behind the scenes setting up the show, marking up the tables, stewarding during judging and when the show opened. The shows were a great opportunity to pass on his knowledge and share his life stories. Alex was a great collector and along with Roy O'Brien and myself used to discuss the hobby of stamp collecting during the quieter moments at the Trading Hut.

Knowing Alex helped my interest in cacti and succulents to grow and continues to this day. Alex was so committed that, along with Ann, he was very active in the running of the Lambeth Cacti and Houseplant Society for over thirty years, where again he was able to promote his love of plants. Once fully retired he was always on hand to help unload a delivery at the Trading Hut or sell plants at our flower shows.

Alex will be remembered by many of us for his knowledge, charm, friendliness and 'life' stories and our thoughts are with Ann at this time.

Tony Pizzoferro

A BIG THANK YOU

The LHS would like to say “**THANK YOU**” to the following outlets, who offer 10% discount on purchases to our members (on production of a current membership card).

The Secret Garden
70 Westow Hill
Upper Norwood, SE19 3AF
020 8771 8200

Terra Firma Landscapes & Garden Centre
Knollys Road, SW16 2JJ 020 8769 7321
www.terrafirmalandscapes.com
www.knollysgardencentre.com

Premier Sheds & Fencing
Station Approach
Streatham Common, SW16 5NR
and Knollys Road, SW16 2JJ
020 8677 0459 www.shedandfencing.co.uk

Alleyn Park Garden Centre
77 Park Hall Road, SE21 8ES
020 8670 7788
www.alleynpark.co.uk

Talk: **SHARING THE SECRETS OF THE VICTORIAN WALLED GARDEN** by Chris Smith, 26th November 2008

Chris runs Pennard Plants in a walled garden in Somerset, which sparked his interest in their history and development many years ago. He brought along a good many props – tools, pictures, books and old catalogues which we were able to see in the interval, as well as “Heritage” and “Heirloom” vegetable seeds to buy. In the 1800’s the newly-rich mill, mine and factory owners wanted to live somewhere with cleaner air. Many chose the south-west, the better climate of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset, places accessible by coach and later by train. They built grand houses to impress the neighbours, and also walled kitchen gardens to feed themselves and their workers. In the sheltered, warmer conditions a wider variety of crops could be grown. The garden had to supply fruit, vegetables and cut flowers for the house all year round. Fruit was kept in a fruit store to extend its life. Peaches, apricots and nectarines were used fresh or bottled in alcohol. Root crops were dug up and stored in sand until needed. Hot beds were made, using fresh horse manure, to force early salads and pineapples.

In the greenhouse, salad leaves were grown all year round. Grapes were stored for months in racks, the stems of the bunches inserted into specially-designed glass bottles containing sugar-water and charcoal. The flavour actually improved over time! Cucumbers were kept straight by enveloping the young fruit inside a straight glass tube. When ready, they could be removed via the open bottom of the tube.

Flowers were needed to decorate the house, and sometimes changed for each meal. Some shrubs such as lilac and forsythia were forced to give earlier flowers. Many plants used indoors were thought then to be tender, such as agapanthus, hyacinths and azaleas. Grape vines were trained in pots with a single stem; these were arranged to protrude through the centre of a specially-adapted dining table!

To manage all this work there was a head gardener with his own house; under him, foremen of the different sections (eg fruit garden, vegetable garden); then apprentices, garden boys, and casual labour when needed. (Women only came in as casual labour – and they were paid much less than the men). All worked from dawn to dusk, six days a week. The only paid holidays were Easter and Christmas.

The apprentices usually lived together in a small cottage or “bothy”. The work was hard – digging, weeding, manuring, watering. The apprenticeship lasted for 6-7 years, with very low pay, and much studying to do. Once qualified, they usually moved on to better jobs in other gardens. The hardest work fell to the garden boy – he had to clean out the boilers and the thunderboxes, stoke the boilers, cook and clean for the apprentices, and wash a never-ending supply of pots. Another of his duties was to sit bare-bottomed on the soil in spring – if he could stay for ten minutes, the soil was deemed warm enough for sowing and planting!

Fruit trees were usually pollinated by hand. Insect control generally meant poisonous sprays – arsenic and strychnine. Many gadgets were invented for the dispensing of sprays and powders to control pest and diseases, many dangerous to humans as well as their intended targets. Today most of them are of historical interest only.

The best legacy of the walled kitchen garden is to be found in those still being used as working gardens. Pennard Plants is one of these – all are welcome to visit and see (and buy) the superb plants and seeds, also available by mail order.

Betty Cox

Pennard Plants, The Walled Gardens, East Pennard, Somerset BA4 6TU
01749 860039 www.pennardplants.com

“The Victorian Kitchen Garden” by Jennifer Davies, BBC Books, 1987. Also available as a 2-video set.

WHO WAS JOHN INNES?

There are many different brands of the John Innes loam formulae on sale in garden centres, but it is surprising to learn that they were not developed until after the death of their eponymous founder.



A property developer and philanthropist, John Innes (1829-1904) lived for most of his life in Merton, south-west London, but his family came from Scotland. His father, also John, dealt in goods from the West Indies, in London. John the son went into the family business with his older brother James. The brothers took advantage of the rapidly-expanding City of London in the mid-19th century, and bought tradesmen's properties to develop as business premises. In 1864 they formed the City of London Real Property Company, now part of Land Securities.

From 1866 the brothers bought land around Merton, exploiting the new railway connections with central London, and building housing for City workers. James married and settled near Horsham, but John remained a lifelong bachelor and teetotaler. He moved to Manor Farm on Watery Lane, Merton Park, and developed and extended this house as Manor House. (It is now part of the Rutlish School, Wimbledon).

John became a local philanthropist and farmer, while continuing to build housing in Merton Park. He farmed at Morden Hall, and was a member and churchwarden of St Mary's, Merton, where he donated a bell inscribed "John Innes gave me 1897", which is still rung. He helped set up the Merton Schools, opened in 1871, and the Merton Boys Club and Manor Club, which are still active.

His estate workers were rewarded with an annual outing, on which he often joined them. His garden parties for the Merton residents became famous. He arranged circus or seaside outings and dinner for deserving schoolchildren, and gave land for the John Innes Recreation Ground off Watery Lane. He served as a JP on the Kingston bench.

He died in 1904, and his funeral was a major event. His estate workers acted as pallbearers and formed a guard of honour. His grave is in the churchyard of St Mary's, just south of the church. His reputation lives on as a "benevolent dictator" – he was generous, but liked to get his own way.

A very wealthy man with no dependents, he left most of his fortune to establish the John Innes Horticultural Institution at Manor House in Merton, using his house and land. The famous John Innes composts were developed here in the 1930s, and the Institution has taken no profit from this. The Institution expanded and moved first to Hertfordshire, and then to Colney near Norwich, where it is today the internationally-respected plant research establishment, The John Innes Centre.

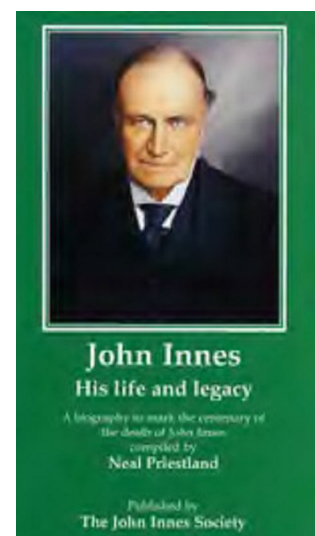
At home in Merton there are the John Innes Conservation Areas and the John Innes Park, which continue the ethos of the housing environment of 100 years ago. The John Innes Society of Merton works to maintain this special environment.

Perhaps when you next lug a bag of John Innes compost into your garden, you will think upon the memory of this genial, but somewhat despotic man, and his lasting good works!

Val Hunn

Source: Time & Leisure, August 2004

Further reading: "John Innes – his life and legacy" by Neal Priestland (2004), available from the John Innes Society, 020 8542 4879, £7.00. www.johninnesociety.org.uk



Dates for 2009

- May 27th** Talk: Blooming Britain – a look at the great gardens of the British Isles
Colin Jones *Colin, who has addressed us before, is a keen gardener, photographer and traveller. He is a judge and accredited lecturer in horticulture.*
- June 24th** Talk: Carshalton Lavender
Roger Webb *Roger is part of the local community that maintains 3 acres of lavender fields in the London Borough of Sutton. (Lavender products will be on sale).*
- July 18th/19th** **Lambeth Country Show**
- July 22nd** Talk: Namaqualand Spring
Dr Peter Brandham *Dr Brandham worked for many years in the Jodrell Laboratory at Kew. This talk describes a visit to South Africa's Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden, followed by a journey to the Western cape, where the desert blooms in September. Portraits of desert succulents, especially Lachenalia species, are featured largely in this programme.*
- August 26th** Talk: Preparing entries for the horticultural show
John Burrows *John Burrows is an experienced national judge. He will discuss and demonstrate the preparation and presentation of horticultural entries for our Summer Show.*
- September 5th** **LHS Summer Show**
- September 23rd** Talk: Nature reserves and wildlife gardening
Rebecca Clark and Reuben Hawkwood *Our speakers work for the Trust for Urban Ecology. They will speak about and show the wide variety of schemes in which the Trust is involved.*
- October 21st** **LHS Prize-Giving and Social**
- November 25th** Talk: Flowers in season
Audrey Hammond *To take us up to the end of our year, we will once again be able to watch and listen to Audrey as she tells us, with demonstrations, about painting her favourite subjects, flowers. Well-known for her paintings of the Crystal Palace area, she has a passion for flowers and paints them whenever possible. Her etchings of horticultural subjects are detailed studies of plant life. Her garden, although often neglected, frequently serves as a model. Paintings and prints will be on sale.*

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

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

Entry is free and non-members are welcome!

TRADING HUT

The **TRADING HUT** is well-stocked, as ever, with all your gardening needs. 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 – 4.30pm (last customer 4.15)

Please remember to show your membership card

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

Exceptions – the Hut will be closed on Show dates – July 18th/19th (Lambeth Country Show) and Saturday 5th September (LHS Summer Show)

SALE DATES

BEDDING PLANTS SALE: 2/3rd, 9/10th, 16th/17th May 2009

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

LIBRARY

Don't forget we have a comprehensive library of over 500 books, as well as magazines and videos. Open during normal Hut hours. See inside this issue for a Library update article.

VOLUNTEERS are still needed on Saturday or Sunday!

If you would like to join the happy band of volunteers 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 Secretary, Rhiannon Harlow Smith, on 020 8244 9317 or secretary@lambethhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

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