



Derbyshire Group

NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2022

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FROM THE CHAIR

How time flies. It doesn't seem five minutes since I wrote my previous article 'From The Chair', wherein I expressed the hope that you had a good gardening summer. Little did I realise how exceptionally hot and dry the summer would be and what challenges we would all face. I expect that, like me, you had many shrivelled and stunted plants. My crinodendron looks more like a crino-dead-one, my astilbes quickly became my astilweres, and even my runner beans soon became has beans. Just to keep the spirits up, however, at least my plants from hotter climates put up spirited resistance. Nonetheless, you sometimes wonder why you bother. I guess, however, that after a season of HPSD talks, a browse through seed catalogues, and a winter 'rest' (are gardeners ever allowed to rest?) I will be raring to go again next spring: better to be a perennial than a tender annual! I'm sure that you will feel the same too.

Another 'conspirator' in spoiling the summer for gardeners, of course, was Covid and its after-effects. It certainly adversely impacted on our day trips and annual holidays. They are usually over-subscribed, but they weren't this year: the number of withdrawals must have made Ian dizzy. Those who made it to these events, however, were rewarded with some memorable gardens and the pleasure of sharing their love of gardening with fellow enthusiasts. These visits really enhance our group's activities, and we are grateful to Ian, and Anne, of course, for organising and managing them. Unfortunately, this year's holiday will be the last one for the foreseeable future due to the provider's significantly increased costs, which naturally would significantly increase the cost of the holiday compared to earlier years, and a change in trade practice. Ian had, in fact, already arranged a 2023 holiday to the gardens of Herefordshire. The coach company's charges had risen considerably because of the fuel crisis in terms of both actual fuel costs and the need to significantly increase drivers' wages to retain them. Further, hotels were said to be enjoying more staycation bookings and our intended hotel (and others, Ian was told) thus wanted a non-returnable deposit of £30 per head by 20th June this year, so this would be £1200 for a possible 40 participants. Since we couldn't speak to members about this until our September meeting and get a feel of the likely interest, and we didn't wish to risk the loss of a considerable guesstimated deposit, the sad decision to abandon the holiday plans was made. We will, in due course, confer with you to see if we can come up with a suitable alternative or modification. However, we would need a new organiser because, as you will know, Ian had announced his decision to stand down from organising the holiday after 2023, so the 2022 holiday has proved to be his swansong.

The good news is, however, that Ian has agreed to continue organising day trips for the time being. He hopes to organise three next year and has a combined visit to Ness Botanical Gardens and Arley Hall booked for June, and one to the gardens of designer Tom Stuart-Smith and his sister in Hertfordshire in July. Inevitably, the cost of these trips will be higher than those in previous years, particularly the latter one, so we will be trying to ascertain the likely level of support for this trip at our autumn meetings.

We now have another member who has taken up a national HPS role. You will recall that Ann Franks become the national Publicity Coordinator earlier in the year, and now Ruth Sands is

one of four volunteers who make up the new national horticultural advisory team, a role to which she is well suited given her considerable gardening experience. I must also belatedly congratulate and thank Trevor Edwards who became our Derbyshire conservation scheme officer several months ago. I should have mentioned this in the previous newsletter but omitted to do so. Please accept my apologies, Trevor.

You may not know that our website host and domain name provider was an American company. We have used them for several years. Of course, this incurs a cost and we thought it prudent to have a look at comparable costs and services from other providers before paying our annual renewal fee. To our delight we have found a helpful, friendly local one whose fee is considerably less and so have engaged them. Celia tells me that the new website is more user friendly and Martin at the provider, Dot Five Nine, has offered help in improving its appearance, using photos to be provided by several members. Do look out for the result.

Ann and Hildegard have commenced giving talks to local groups about HPS and HPS Derbyshire Group. They have received eight enquiries and three confirmations, I understand. No doubt the talks will be well researched and enjoyable, so if your local gardening group are likely to be interested, please have a word with Ann or Hildegard: not only will your group have a pleasant evening, but we may also have the benefit of resultant new members. There will be a minimal charge to cover costs.

As with every individual and group in the country, we are sure to be facing considerably increased running costs in our forthcoming season, and subsequently, given the current economic situation. Although we have a substantial reserve of capital, your committee felt that we just couldn't run this down irresponsibly. We thus discussed the way forward at our August committee meeting. The good news is that we decided to leave the annual membership fee unchanged at £5 per annum, but also reluctantly decided to increase meeting admission fees to £2 for members and £5 for visitors from 1st January 2023. We feel that we need to maintain a stable financial base to secure the continued wellbeing of our group and that you will understand our decision and continue to support us, as ever. I hope you will agree that we will still offer great value for money: just consider the cost of other forms of entertainment: not many events cost less than £2. This action should help to maintain a stable financial base and thus ensure the continued wellbeing of our group; something we all desire. I'm sure you will concur.

Sadly, three members have died over the summer: Rose Walton, David Limb, and Lesley Young. In addition, we have learnt of the sudden death of past member Robert Little. Long-standing members will recall Robert and his support of wife Pauline in producing our newsletter. We have many fond memories of them all; they have enriched our own lives. We are grateful for their acquaintance and send our deepest sympathies to their loved ones.

You will be used to my pleas for volunteers, as we cannot function without them. I extend my thanks to the existing leaders and their teams who staff our plant sales, raffle, sales table and kitchen, and those who meet and greet and those who set up and operate our audio-visual system. Currently we particularly need someone to assist John Marshall and his team with our audio-visual system; John's health has deteriorated, and he would like a back-up. I'm told it's not difficult, but a little interest or background knowledge in this area would be helpful. One

or two additional 'meet and greeters' would also be useful, and any of the meeting day tasks would operate more smoothly with an extra pair of hands, so please give serious thought to volunteering: it doesn't have to be at every meeting, particularly if we have a good pool of volunteers. Leaving it to someone else will ensure that it doesn't happen!

Another one-off volunteering opportunity has also arisen. Our national society has been looking for future local group hosts for their AGM and speech day. Very fairly, they try to hold the event in different parts of the country so that it is not always the same people who have to travel long distances or the same people who have to stage it. Volunteer groups have come forward for the next two years and we have provisionally agreed to host the event in 2025. Naturally, much planning and a long lead-in time will be needed. Ann Franks has volunteered to take the lead for us, and she will be compiling a list of volunteers this autumn to see if we have sufficient numbers to proceed. If it does, it will help to boost our profile too, so do give Ann your support, please.

At the time of writing, our 2022/3 talk season has not begun, but I know that Celia has been busy obtaining a wide variety of speakers and subjects for our talks, as usual. I'm sure that there will be much to enjoy and I look forward to seeing you at our events.

Nigel Needham

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the autumn newsletter

Again, thank you for your various contributions to this newsletter.

It may be that this summer's heat hasn't only resulted in shrivelled flowers, but that it has also dried up your literary veins, resulting in a rather minimalist edition of the newsletter. Nevertheless, I hope you enjoy the various articles and newsy bits. For the long term we may wish to discuss whether a newsletter is actually still something our members want.

Most of you will again receive this newsletter electronically, but if you would like a printed copy, please let us know. We do print some copies for those, who do not use emails.

Please send items for the next newsletter to wiesehofer@btinternet.com.

Please make sure you provide your complete name, as attribution is not possible without this

COVER PICTURE

Hylotelephium Herbstfreude, in the sedum family, loves exposure to sunshine and is an invaluable late provider of nectar.

NEW - HPSD EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

Celia and I are so impressed by the HPS Nottingham Group's Calendar that we thought we would try creating one for the Derbyshire Group. At the moment the Derbyshire Group Diary includes our meetings and events, but we want it to be much wider and showcase gardening events across Derbyshire. This will include plant fairs, shows, sales and open days which our members will be interested in. Our first version of a diary is below, and we need your help to populate it with events and activities so please e mail me at afranks700@gmail.com with details of any events you know of. We will need the name of the event, dates, and the time and ,if it's available, the cost, parking details and any web links. We plan to publish an updated version in each newsletter and a version will be held on the updated website.

Many Thanks Ann and Celia



DERBYSHIRE GROUP DIARY 2022/23

For more information, see our website www.hpsderbyshire.co.uk

Or visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/hpsd2>

September

Sat 17 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Karen Gimson. My Life as a Garden Designer Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £1 non members £3
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Sun 18 th 10-3	Felley Priory September Plant Fair See website for details www.felleypriory.co.uk/upcoming-events Entry £5 per adult, Underwood, Nottinghamshire, NG16 5FJ
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October

Sat 15 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Colin Hickman, Cultivation and Propagation of Nerines, Tulbaghia, Dierama and Associated Plants Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB
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	Members £1 non members £3
November	
Sat 19 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Neil Timm (Fern Nursery) Flower Show Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £1 non-members £3
December	
Sat 10 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speakers: Martin and Jill Fish, Gardening on the Menu - The Winter Table We will be given a talk, food to sample and 3 recipes. Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £1 non-members £3
January	
Sat 21 st 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Camilla Anderson, The Gardens of the Dukes of Devonshire and Northumberland Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £2 non-members £5
February	
Sat 18 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Gordon Malt, Structure in the Garden Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £2 non-members £5
March	
Sat 18 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speakers: Samantha and Nigel Hopes (Hopes Garden Plants). Ashwood Specialities Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £2 non members £5
April	
April 15 th 2pm	HPSD meeting Speaker: Paula Routledge, Growing for the Spring British Flower Market Shirland Village Hall, Main Road, Shirland, Alfreton, DE55 6BB Members £2 non members £5

THE HARDY PLANT SOCIETY DERBYSHIRE GROUP

INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT

INCOME	31.7.22	31.7.21	31.7.20	31.7.19
Annual Subscriptions	635	8	512	564
Meeting Fees	521	0	645	796
Raffle Proceeds	390.05	0	414.15	514.08
Book , cards etc sales	876.3	160	510.55	597.3
Plant Sales	321.45	0	231.7	485.07
Annual Plant Fair	2183.5	0	0	2241.5
Coach Trips	3478.15	1038	1263.25	3100
Refund Holiday surplus	0	0	558	390
Donations	6	50	0	0
Misc Income	17.05	0	2.05	45.92
Deposit Interest	63.12	89.39	119.89	22.62
	8491.62	1345.39	4256.59	8756.49
Speakers Fees & Expenses	919	764	1815	1401
Hall Hire monthly meetings	308	0	205	343
Hall Hire - Plant Fair	59	0	0	59
Refreshments	27.08	0	169.9	49.77
Raffle Prizes	51.39	0	92.12	128.15
Book , Card etc purchases	666.47	0	476.53	529.21
Plant Fair Stallholders share	1302.25	0	0	1288.18
Coach Trips & Deposits	3460.25	675	1263.25	3419.66
Hall Hire Committee meetings / Expenses	69	0	11	34
Printing & Copying	237.5	128.57	365.15	418.2
Postage , Stationery etc	82.31	95.64	21.82	18.28
Assets / Equipment purchased	0	0	0	525.99
Website / Zoom	287.21	284.41	186.48	244.45
Gratuities	0	0	0	60
Appreciations	50	20	0	100
NFU / RHS Insurance	75	75	75	0
RHS Sub	35	35	35	35
Misc Expenses	0	0	25.48	0
Charitable Donations	100	0	0	0
	7729.46	2077.62	4741.73	8653.89
Total Income	8491.62	1345.39	4256.59	8756.49
Less Total Expenses	-7729.46	-2077.62	-4741.73	-8653.89

Surplus / Deficit	762.16	-732.23	-485.14	102.6
BALANCE SHEET				
Cash In hand { Floats }	70	70	70	90
Current Account { Santander }	2680.79	812.32	10.85	2414.88
Uncleared Cheques as at Year end	-292.5	-123.09	0	-649
Credits not banked as at year end	0	0	0	30
Deposit Account { Mansfield Build Soc }	8472.67	9409.55	10820.16	9500.27
	10930.96	10168.78	10901.01	11386.15
Financed By:				
Opening Accumulated Funds	10168.78	10901.01	11386.15	11283.55
Surplus / Deficit for the year	762.16	-732.23	-485.14	102.6
	10930.94	10168.78	10901.01	11386.15

GARDEN VISITS – PAST AND FUTURE

THE GARDENS OF KENT, OUR 2022 HOLIDAY

It looks as though this will be the last HPSD holiday organised by Ian Evans (see my 'From The Chair' item) and the last one for the foreseeable future in any event. If so, Ian must have wondered what he had done to upset the Gods to make his finale so 'eventful'. Aside from unplanned meanderings down single-file Kent country roads and unexpectedly becoming a financial services provider, there was the small matter of 18 withdrawals from the holiday, virtually all from health problems or precautions, but fortunately leaving slightly more actual participants (35) than cancellations. It was a little bit like that famous Agatha Christie novel 'And Then There Were None' where the characters are slowly eliminated one by one! It's a good job that Ian has the ability to take these things in his stride: I might have ended up bald had I been in charge. What do you mean 'might'?

As ever, the holiday and the gardens were excellent. I won't attempt to comprehensively describe all the gardens we visited since this can make for tedious reading. Instead, I will just note one or two highlights and mention plants which I particularly appreciated.

After a coffee stop at Toddington, we arrived at our first garden, Hyde Hall (via a detour to Southend!). The weather was glorious and the garden in good heart. Quite a sizeable garden, we found, but still with plenty of grassy areas for visitors to wander. Perhaps this made it a little less 'homely' than the other RHS gardens, though this may be down to my imagination. Nonetheless, there were many gardens, beds and borders to explore with, as expected from the garden's reputation, many featuring plants from hot climates which flourish in the dry climate enjoyed by Hyde Hall.

Two appealing plants I found were *Dianthus barbatus* 'Sooty' (see right) and a dazzling bright blue hardy salvia which edged a border but for which I could not find a name. I have grown 'Sooty' from seed in the past. It really is a dark shade of red; the photo herewith, taken in bright sunlight, reveals the flowers in a far 'brighter' colour than they would normally appear. Some people may find it too dark a colour, but I think that it stands out really well against plants with lighter coloured foliage and am a firm admirer.



Saturday, day 2, commenced at Sissinghurst, which, as usual, didn't disappoint and seemed to intoxicate some of our members, inducing them to wax lyrical about its plants and features. Veering right on entry we found the rose garden and cottage garden where the colour and foliage combinations were so tasteful and set the tone for the rest of the garden. The moat walk provided some shade and tranquillity as we meandered to the other side of the garden, eventually reaching the famous white garden with its air of calm and serenity (albeit a magnet for photograph-taking visitors). The contrasting plant and flower forms were beautiful. My photographs don't do it justice, so the only one shown here is of a philadelphus stationed near one of its corners. I believe that the variety is 'Enchantment' and it certainly lived up to its name, whether viewed from a distance or close-up. The flowers seemed such a 'pure' white and its yellow stamens so complementary.

A new, to me, Sissinghurst feature was the Delos Garden. Harold Nicholson and Vita Sackville-West devised the original version from happy memories of time spent on the Greek island of Delos. Their inexperience with Mediterranean plants resulted in the project eventually failing. However, the garden has now been re-created with designer Dan Pearson essentially adhering to the original garden. It most definitely has a Mediterranean look and feel, with succulents, grey foliage and many other 'hot plants' amid huge pieces of Kent ragstone which imitate their Greek equivalent. It certainly was striking, and I admired it, but just wondered if it was in-keeping with the rest of the Sissinghurst gardens. Doubtless many would think my reservation ill-founded: gardening can be a very subjective thing.



Zingy Dahlia at Penshurst Place

On Saturday afternoon we visited the gardens at Penshurst Place, a 14th century manor house which once belonged to Henry VIII. The gardens are formal with 'rooms' created by yew hedges and roses much in evidence in the beds and borders. However, there were many other interesting plants. One which caught my eye was the small, zingy dahlia (see above), with its really bright orange/red flowers off-set against dark foliage; it really stood out in the border. Another was the pictured yellow rose, a rambler, I think, which looked beautiful against the brick wall behind it. Two notable elements in the gardens were the union jack garden and the peony garden. The former was an enormous garden cleverly planted in the shape and colours of the union jack. Roses formed the red and white parts of the flag and lavender the blue parts. It really was striking, especially when viewed from its raised viewing platform. The peony bed was also massive and was literally planted with nothing but peonies. There were many whopping peony heads but sadly we were just too late to see them in their prime: they just looked brown and sad. They must have been a magnificent sight in full bloom.



Our Sunday morning visit was to Goodnestone Park Gardens, remotely situated between Deal and Canterbury, and a haunt of Jane Austen apparently, though we didn't see her.



The 15-acre gardens lie within park and woodland, their highlight being the magnificent mixed borders which were very colourful and sported an excellent display of herbaceous perennials. Another zingy plant caught the eye here, the pictured bright yellow eremurus, the fox-tail lily. It really was a stand-out plant.

Far more subtle yet still much admired were occasional substantial

clumps of Erigeron 'Quakeress', a simple daisy, one might muse. However, it flowered prolifically and seemed to have an air of insouciance with its scruffily dainty habit and flowers, and I think it was the most bought plant by our members. Noting some of the buyers, I expect it will be much in evidence at



forthcoming HPSP plant fairs. Two other special mentions here: Paul Bagshaw, a most friendly and helpful head gardener, and the delicious, toasted sandwiches at the Old Dairy Café: both greatly appreciated. One final abiding memory of Goodnestone was of our coach being briefly stuck on its long drive. Our considerate driver had parked to allow other traffic as much room as possible on the drive, but when he came to pull away one of the coach wheels had other ideas. However, after some subtle coaxing from Ian and the driver we were off to our afternoon garden, Hole Park.

On arrival at Hole Park the coach was immediately boarded, and security checks enforced by two very friendly and enthusiastic black Labradors. Having ascertained that the coach was drugs and contraband free, they allowed us to disembark and listen to the warm reception afforded by their owner Mr Edward Barham, who, as promised, later had a chat with us and waved us off as we departed. He deserved the greatest admiration for doing so as he was under considerable emotional stress, his father having died earlier in the day. I certainly would not have minded had he delegated the task to someone else or just left us to our own devices, but he felt it his duty to speak to his guests.

Close by the house was an enormous magnolia grandiflora. It still had a few soft lemon-coloured flowers to which Mr Barham drew our attention and encouraged us to smell them. He felt that if Chanel could bottle this scent, they would make a fortune. The subsequent comments I heard all seemed to endorse this opinion.

The 16-acre gardens are set within 200 acres of parkland. They include several gardens of differing nature, each with their own character and planting and all well maintained with some interesting plants. I particularly liked the long borders which contained many different herbaceous perennials. Within these borders was a much-admired pink flowering plant which was blooming prolifically as can be seen in the nearby photograph. However, I could find no one who could identify it.



I would be interested if any reader could come up with its name.

Also prominent in the gardens were some vibrant alstroemerias with various 'fiery' hues.

The woodland walk was most enjoyable, affording shade and relative solitude. Fortunately, the three resident bears (see photo on page 13) were more intent on finding honey at the top of a deceased oak tree so we were not in any danger. I think this was the first time I had seen a specimen quercus ursa!

Ian had ordered cream teas for us, and they proved to be delicious (as was the gluten-free cake for our coeliac traveller I was told). Mrs Barham personally baked the scones for all 'diners', not just for us, and there are usually around 15,00 visitors a year: a Herculean task! The Labradors boarded the bus again at the end of our visit and cleared us for departure, so it was back to the hotel for our evening meal and, hopefully, a good night's sleep, before our final day and the prospect of two more excellent gardens

We started our final day with a visit to the garden at Great Comp near West Malling. The garden is now a charitable trust but owes its modern-day fame to Roderick (known as Eric) and Joyce Cameron who bought the manor at Great Comp in 1957, and set about transforming its seven-acre garden, which they first opened to the public in 1968. Curator William Dyson told us about the garden and its history saying that Eric, a Scot of rich character, had built several follies within the garden, many being created from a bulk purchase of local stone, and some inspired by architecture seen on his and Joyce's travels. We found these mainly located in the woodland and peripheral areas of the garden; they certainly had character. However, most people seemed to be more attracted, perhaps naturally as HPS members, to the perennial borders, with the longest borders flanking a large lawn which made an excellent backdrop to the colourful and diverse perennials displayed. William Dyson specialises in breeding salvias and has his own nursery on site where many can be bought, along with other plants. The nursery is not too large and the range of plants not extensive, but, naturally, there were some fine plants to be bought. Hard choices had to be made.



Our selections were Salvia 'Pink Pong', a shrubby hybrid, which bears vibrant pink flowers (see left) and Salvia nemorosa 'Caradonna Pink Inspiration'. Pink Pong's plant label states that it is a flowering machine which seems to be hardy in Kent. I hope it is hardy in Derbyshire too. We felt that the pink flowers of 'Pink Inspiration' were a rather nice alternative to the usual blue flowers of nemorosa types. Had it been available for sale, we would also

probably have bought Salvia microphylla 'Orange Door', another vigorous bloomer which, to us, stood out in the border (see right).



Savouring the images of Great Comp we travelled homewards via our final garden, Pettifers, in the Oxfordshire village of Wardington, near Banbury. I embarrassingly admit that I had not heard of this garden previously, yet it has earned the reputation of being one of the most influential gardens in England, admired by many gardening luminaries, not least Arabella Lennox-Boyd who describes the owner and designer, Gina Price, as "not a professional

designer, but a brilliant one". Gina and husband James moved to Pettifers in 1984 when Gina was a relative gardening novice. However, she had two great advantages: an exceptional natural eye for garden design and planting, and the acquaintance of Diany Binny and Betsy Muir of Kiftsgate. These ladies seemed to use a stick and carrot approach to encourage Gina, at one point Diany describing a Pettifers border as "mingy". This 'accolade' could certainly not be applied now. With the aid of her indispensable gardener Polly, Gina has produced a magical garden which is subject to fairly regular changes, Polly deeming Gina 'unsentimental'.

The themed herbaceous borders abound with seasonal colour and ribbons of plants/colour link the plantings.



Both blue and white campanulas were prominent at the time of our visit: the vibrant blue one shown here (left) was a real eye-catcher.



My powers of description can't do this garden justice. It was beautiful and of the gardens we visited the one to which we could most relate in size (albeit one and a half acres), style and content: a real plantaholic's garden. Gina and Polly were most friendly and generous with their time and advice, and this, combined with the welcome cuppa and delicious cookies, made a fitting end to our holiday. All that was left was to travel back to Alfreton where we arrived, unsurprisingly, very close to Ian's predicted time of seven o' clock.

Thus, the holiday was another triumph for Ian's meticulous planning and organisation, with great assistance from Anne, of course. We have been truly fortunate to reap the benefits of their diligence about this and all the other holidays they have organised for us, and for this we are extremely grateful.

Finally, please accept my apologies for the shortcomings of my article, notably in respect of the absence of names for some plants: either because they were not labelled in the garden, or due to my unwarranted faith in my ability to remember names after the event and/or the failure to safely keep the names I recorded contemporaneously. I will never graduate from being a cub reporter, I think.

Nigel Needham

DAY TRIP TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE-20TH JULY 2022

HPS members had our usual prompt start from Travelodge Alfreton at 8am. With a temperature of 21degrees showing on the display in the coach it was a blessed relief from the high 30's of the previous 2 days.

Our first destination was Batsford Arboretum, Moreton-in-Marsh. Covering over 56 acres with 1,500 plus trees there was much to see. Algernon Freeman- Mitford (grandfather of Deborah- Duchess of Devonshire) developed the site from 1886 after his return from Asia and this influenced his choice of planting and features, such as the buddha statue (right).

This is an All-Year-Round garden and the National Collection of Japanese Flowering cherries must look a treat. The magnolias,



sorbus etc. would all have their day, and the acers will be stunning. This one -"Acer Pulmatum Bloodgood" (see left) was gorgeous even before the leaves turn. Bamboo groves are dotted around the site and a stream ran from

the top, through rock gardens and into the lake below.

Amongst all the huge trees the stand of redwoods was almost too high to see the tops. There were many new plantings of the more unusual to ensure the longevity of the garden They are also working to conserve "Red Dot" trees i.e. endangered species-with small groups planted around the garden.

ROCKCLIFFE GARDEN -UPPER SLAUGHTER

In comparison to Batsford, this private garden was only begun 40 years ago-created from agricultural land. The owners-Simon and Emma Keswick-began by constructing a ha-ha to keep the sheep out.

Over the years they have created yew-hedged rooms, a sunken garden, stone walled kitchen garden, terraces etc, their latest project being a "Millennium Dovecote" which is approached through an avenue of large yew topiary birds



Emma gave us a guided tour and her enthusiasm and knowledge were inspiring. We were served refreshments from the orangery which overlooked the sunken garden, containing a rectangular pond. This was surrounded by 6 *Cornus Contraversa Variegata*



I would describe Rockcliffe as a garden of structure as opposed to a plantsman's' garden, but the terrace in front of the house was set out with herbs and pots with striking combinations of plants, and one of the rooms had an urn and seating area with perennials. There was also a lily walk.

The kitchen garden took your breath away, set in a small valley contained by stone walls. The problem of rabbits was controlled by nearly everything being grown in Gothic style fruit cages (see right).

There are 3 very hard-working gardeners on site !!!!!.



As we returned to the coach-looking back to the house framed by an avenue of beech obelisks- you could only admire their vision and determination

Patricia Harris

FUTURE DAY TRIPS (2023)

Ian Evans has kindly organised a day trip to Ness and Arley on 14 June. The cost is dependent on uptake, i.e.,
£50 for 35 passengers or
£46 for 40 passengers

Depending on how many members are interested, he will also go ahead with a July 2023 trip to Tom Stuart Smith's and Tom's sister's gardens if we have a positive return from members at our first Autumn meeting. Cost would be £50 - £60.

A May/July trip is also in the pipeline. Watch this space!

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

THE HARDY PLANT SOCIETY ANNUAL LECTURE DAY AND AGM 10TH SEPTEMBER 2022

June Skinner and I attended the first face to face meeting since Covid put paid to such things and what a great day we had. The ALD/AGM was hosted by the Somerset Group and took place in Taunton.

Before the day kicked off with the formal welcome and introductions, we were able to peruse the displays of the various specialist groups and purchase plants from the nurseries in attendance. These were

- ✓ Desert to Jungle, specialising in unusual borderline hardy plants
- ✓ Elworthy Cottage Plants offering good quality hardy perennials
- ✓ Long Acre Plants specialising in plants for shade and woodland and
- ✓ Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants who need no introduction

All were of high quality as one might expect, and we were able to indulge ourselves.

The Somerset Group's table also deserves a mention as it had a wide selection of member's plants for sale at modest prices. Having satisfied our plantaholic tendencies we made our way into the auditorium for the opening of the meeting.

Roy Lancaster gave the introductory speech which was poignant and extremely moving as he said how wonderful it was that we could at last meet in the time honoured way and went on to talk about our late Queen who had only just passed away. He had had the privilege of meeting her on several occasions. A minute's silence was observed.

The first talk of the day was given by Rosie Hardy who stepped into the breach - she had been scheduled to talk in the afternoon but the morning speaker - Keith Wiley - was held up in a traffic jam due to an accident on the M5 and didn't actually make it until after lunch. Her talk was "Autumn Flowering Perennials" and she did not disappoint. As usual she had a range of plants and talked about their various characteristics and attributes. There were too many to mention here but as a taster one that sparked my interest were Brunnera 'Emerald Mist', Actaea 'Queen of Sheba', Rudbeckia triloba 'Prairie Glow', a couple of Alliums that flower in autumn - a selected form of tuberosum 'Cliffs of Dover' and 'Lavender Bubbles' - and a shrub Abelia 'Radiance' which she said could be used as a substitute for box.



After lunch the AGM was dealt with speedily and then it was the turn of our afternoon speaker - Keith Wiley - who mercifully had made it through the traffic congestion - and who gave one of the most inspiring and heartfelt talks I have ever heard. "Gardening on the Edge" was his story of the garden he and his late wife Ros created at Wildside. From a bare, sloping field he sculpted the land to create hills and gullies to form different aspects so that he could grow as wide a range of plants as possible to realise a

romanticised version of nature as he put it. He harked back to his days as Head Gardener at the Garden House nearby where he laid the foundations for his future vision. His photographs were breath-taking and underlined his philosophy of trying to emulate natural ecosystems. I was so pleased that he had been able to make it.

Roy Lancaster ended the day and gave the vote of thanks. Even he was lost in admiration at Keith's talk. We had an excellent and thoroughly enjoyable day. I feel it's a shame that more people from our Group do not attend. Next year's AGM is being hosted by Worcestershire Group at Pershore College which is not so far away so perhaps more people will feel able to attend. They will not be disappointed.

Linda O'Neill

Editor's Note: Maybe a group trip could be organised?

HOSTING THE AGM 2025

Ann has suggested that we put Derbyshire forward as the National AGM location for 2025. It would be beneficial for our group and local plant growers. Volunteers to be asked for at next meeting.

I'M NOT A REBEL, NO, NO, NO (BUT I HAVE COMMITTED A CAPITAL OFFENCE)

During our day trip to the Cotswolds in July I took photographs of various plants, shrubs and trees with the intention of posting them to our Facebook page to help keep it 'fresh' and up to date and thus demonstrate to outsiders that we are a vibrant, active group: one worthy of joining. I duly did so, with a short accompanying note for each specimen, and left the site with a warm glow, feeling that I had 'done my bit' for the group.

On subsequently re-visiting the Facebook page I found two comments regarding the posting. One, from a member, was complimentary whilst the other, from a non-HPSD member said "I do wish you would give the generic name a capital first letter. It looks wrong without". Fortunately, Ann, our Facebook controller, had seen the comment before me and given a very tactful reply, acknowledging that the writer was correct; capitals should be used for the genus. However, she added that she would rather see the names without capitals than find "It's just me posting, which is what would happen if we started correcting posts". Wise words indeed, for my initial reaction was one of indignation and 'why do I bother?' My error had been perpetrated due to (inexcusable?) ignorance, however, not defiance of convention. Conventional plant naming dates back to the eighteenth century when Carl Linnaeus devised his binomial naming system, and I wasn't around then, so perhaps I could be given a little leeway.

All this did make me wonder about the convention, however. We would not write of a herring Gull or a dachshund Dog, yet we should write of *Salvia microphylla*. To me, writing plant names totally in lower case is far more consistent and visually attractive, though I would still advocate the use of capitals for the plant variety, e.g 'Royal Bumble', which, to me, is a 'proper name'. However, as my old boss used to say "It's easier to swim with the tide, Nigel", so this is what I will do rather than stubbornly cling to my personal preferences. Those of a certain age may recall the 1963 singalong hit 'He's A Rebel' by The Crystals (note the use of capitals). One verse, suitably abridged and adapted by me, sums up my feelings: "Please don't discourage me, I'll spell crocus with a capital C, so please treat me tenderly, 'cos I'm not a rebel, no, no, no; I'm not a rebel, no, no, no; not me"

Nigel Needham

GROWING THE SEEDS OF SUCCESS

There are few things that can compare with the joy of growing plants from seed. Over the years I've had fun growing vegetables with my children, annuals to fill the temporary gaps in the borders and flowers to fill the house with scent. There are many reasons for growing from seed, it could be about economy or about requiring lots of plants so you can mass/repeat plant them,



along a border or in a meadow. Sometimes it's a rare or unusual plant and someone has kindly given you a few seeds.



Fig 1 and 2: The seed production line

I am a bit reluctant to grow too many tender plants from seed. They need a lot of additional heat early in the year and then mollycoddling for months. However, I have found a small, heated propagator and my window ledges form an ideal proration area for those early starters. Last year I grew *Nicotiana Sylvestris* 'Only the Lonely' they were lovely but with leaves as wide as the plants were high they soon outgrow their allotted space. Next time I think I'll try *Nicotiana* 'Fragrant Cloud' which is smaller. *Cosmos* need starting early under heat, but I wouldn't be without *Cosmos Bipinnatus* 'Purity'. They bring a sparkle to the garden from mid-summer onwards and are really quite trouble free plants



Fig 3 and 4: *Nicotiana sylvestris* 'Only the Lonely' and *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Purity'

Hardy annuals are so easy to grow from seed and I use them around my permanent plants. You just need to prepare the soil, sow, and water and then when germinated ensure you thin them out. This year I've grown

Omphalodes

linifolia which has given me a lovely white froth around the border.



Every year I grow *Nigella* usually *Nigella Damascena* 'Miss Jekyll Alba' 'but this year I tried *Nigella Damascena* 'Albion Green Pod' which has been fantastic, I'm just collecting the seed now for next year. Biennials take two years to reach maturity, but are worth the wait. I love tall white foxgloves *Digitalis Purpurea* 'Alba' and white honesty, *Lunaria Annu var alba* both of which will seed themselves abundantly but don't always come true. As I write this I have quite a few *Campanula Pyramidalis Alba* plants ready to plant out in a new bed and hopefully they will flower next year.

Hardy Perennials are a little slower to flower sometimes taking 3 years but often they flower much earlier. *Malva Moschata f. alba*, *Lychnis Coronaria* 'Alba' and *Dianthus* 'Superbus', all flowered the same year but look much better in the following years. *Lobelia Siphilitica f. albiflora* 'Alba' and ' *Hyssopus Officinalis f albus* both flowered the second year but sometimes I find perennial seeds need a period of cold before they germinate so I leave all the seeds that don't germinate through the winter to see what emerges the following spring.

Fig 5 (right) and 6 (below): *Omphalodes linifolia* and *Nigella Damascena* 'Albion Green Pod'.

A period of cold can help some perennial seeds germinate Finally, there are the plants that you grow once, and you never have to plant again





Borago officinalis (shown right) can soon get out of control and Centranthus Ruber 'Albus' is an abundant self-seeder but unfortunately, they often revert to the pink form. However, I'm always happy to see Erigeron Karvinskianus and Verbena Bonariensis seedlings.



HPS PLANT SEED EXCHANGE

It is nearly time for the publication of the new seed list for the Hardy Plant Seed exchange. It is one of the joys of HPS membership as you get the opportunity to order seeds that other members have donated. The seed comes in small packets which are just enough for most gardens and as well as the usual seeds there are some unusual varieties. Best of all it's free apart from the postage and admin fee which means you can afford to experiment. Of course, if you happen to grow too many plants you just pass them along to your friends and neighbours.

Ann Franks

NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN

Following my graceful retirement in 2020, I was looking forward to a less hectic life as a pensioner. No commitments, empty diary, fewer emails and phone calls, lunch out and time to sort out my garden. Heaven.

And then Covid happened. In some ways, it helped me because it forced me to change focus and tempo. And it made me realise that I wasn't quite ready for the armchair yet. So, when I was asked whether I'd like to take on the county organiser's role for the National Garden Scheme and spend lots of time in beautiful gardens, eating lovely cake, I (foolishly?) agreed. It's been a voyage of discovery and an enormous opportunity to learn from fellow gardeners. And, taking the risk that I will be teaching grandmother to suck eggs, here are some of the tips I have picked up, which I hope to implement next year:

Flower shapes: As someone, who tries hard to garden with nature in mind, I was surprised that I had not noticed the importance of flower shapes for all kinds of insects. My frilly tulips and dahlias did very little to excite pollinators. But provide them with any flower in the Asteraceae family and they buzz around happily. The same goes for any flower that provides a

convenient landing platform. Antirrhinum, salvias(see right) and gladioli all provide a soft landing place. So, I will pay more attention to the variety of plants next year and their flower shapes.



It's OK to be wild: I was fretting about two areas in my garden that I knew I wouldn't get round to 'sorting' before our first garden opening in May. Luckily, I was saved by a reporter from the Chelsea Flower Show. Apparently 2022 was all about 'rewilding' in the show gardens. Clearly, I was ahead of the Chelsea curve. All I needed was a sign for the visitors, explaining that this is the 'wild bit', which saved time and back-ache. But it also provided more breeding spaces for birds, especially the fussy wren male, who often likes to make a series of nests low down for his 'lady', and I have been rewarded with far more birdlife.

The crucial 2 feet: Another invaluable, time saving, tip was to focus on to the first two feet of a border. Apparently, visitors are less likely to pay attention to what goes on further back in the flower border.

Dealing with stubborn weeds: I really hate using anything in the garden that could have an adverse effect on the natural balance that I have been able to establish over the years. That includes weed killer. But a tip from the Dower House in Repton is worth trying if, like me, you are fighting a losing battle against bindweed or other invasive or non-native weeds such as Himalayan Balsam (see left).



Put your hand into a thin rubber glove and grasp some the top growth of the weed. Carefully spray a systemic weedkiller onto the weed, making sure the plant is well covered, but avoid skin contact. Peel off the glove in such a way that you end up with the plant inside the glove. Now bury the glove deeply enough to prevent birds or other creatures accessing it. I put a stone on top for good measure, so that I can find the glove and dispose of it safely when the weedkiller has done its job.

Low-water gardening: I fell in love with alpines when I visited Fir Croft in Calver in May and as a result, took particular note of the many amazing rock and scree gardens I came across on my travels. The hot weather during the summer has increased my interest in this low-maintenance, low watering approach that can better cope with a hosepipe ban. My winter project is to create a rock/ scree garden. Apparently, to make your scree garden I need a sunny site that gets a lot of light even in winter. It shouldn't be hampered by leaf fall and should be slightly sloping. I think I have the ideal site already. At 1000 feet altitude and exposure to all elements it will be a challenge but watch this space!

Less is more: When I first established my garden, I was mainly concerned with getting plants into the bare ground. Unfortunately, I didn't always pay attention to the eventual size

of the plant, which resulted very often in 'the wrong plant in the wrong place', or such serious overcrowding, that individual plants got lost in the melee. I learnt how space between plants impacts on the overall appearance of individual plants, and also on plant health, as air can flow between them and so reduce mildew on Phlox and Verbascum. Making spaces between plants also allows for a better application of mulch and therefore on weed growth.

Chill: Probably the most important thing I learnt is that there are as many gardening styles as there are gardeners. So, if there is no right way to garden, and no 'benchmarks' to follow, then I can stop worrying about getting things 'right'. Instead, I can enjoy my garden and use it to relax and help me deal with life's challenges.

If you have considered opening your garden as part of the National; Garden Scheme, please contact me at hildegard@ngs.org.uk Hildegard Wiesehofer