

Plant Heritage

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



# SUFFOLK GROUP JOURNAL

Spring 2010



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*Front and back page photograph: A mosaic of Hellebores by Marcus Harpur for Harveys Garden Plants.*

*Cover design by Sally Geeve, [www.sallygeeve.com](http://www.sallygeeve.com). Thanks to Nicola Hobbs for layout.*

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*MAGGIE THORPE*

We had a very friendly and happy end to 2009 with an excellent annual general meeting in The Guildhall at Lavenham. Fifty members were greeted with a glass of wine before being introduced to our National Chairman, Professor Mike Alder who gave a short talk on the future of our organisation. We were delighted to have him with us and thank him for coming. The usual business of the evening was followed by a very interesting and amusing talk by Peter Wilson entitled 'A Brief Encounter - with Plants'. He recalled his career through plant sciences, his making of a garden in Norwich and his other encounter with our member Anne Tweddle on the train to London! This talk was followed by a delicious supper provided by members.

Our two plant sales in 2009, both held at Helmingham Hall were blessed with fine weather. Thanks to Sue Burton for her drive to increase publicity, attendance was up and the number of nurseries increased proportionately. We have now decided to name the sales 'Plant Fair' under the heading of Plant Heritage at Helmingham and look forward to adding more sideshows, repeating the Plant Doctor Stall, the Apple Revival Stall in the Autumn and a possible celebrity marquee with plant paintings and prints on display. The catering arrangements will now be entirely the responsibility of Helmingham Hall.

Anna Nightingale has kindly agreed to take over press contacts for the plant sales. If you come across any publications or websites - local or national - which you think could publicise the sales please let her know on [birdmansscs@btinternet.com](mailto:birdmansscs@btinternet.com)

Two very valuable members of our committee are retiring, firstly our Treasurer Justine Corney who has worked with us for six years and secondly, Mavis Smith, our Events Secretary for two years. They have both promised help if needed and we wish them well in the future.

At National level we now have a new Public Relations Officer, Nicola Savage, and Peter Halliwell has been appointed as Threatened Plant Project Coordinator. He is coming to Suffolk Group along with Mercy Morris, National Collections Co-ordinator, to host an Endangered Plant Training Day in January.

Discussion is taking place with all our Suffolk Collection Holders on ways to give them help, particularly display boards which can be used at all their

events and at flower shows. The aim is to make a uniform heading for each board, a corporate image which will then be copied throughout the country and bring more attention to the work Collection Holders do to carry out the conservation of plants for future generations. They are the experts and we need to give them more recognition and as much publicity as possible for the work they do.

I look forward to seeing you at some of the wonderful events Mavis has laid out for us in 2010 and particularly at our Plant Fairs at Helmingham. This year our FREE PLANT will be one of Sarah Cook's National Collection of Cedric Morris Irises, either 'Benton Cordelia' (this is Cedric's most famous prizewinner which received the Dykes Medal in 1955), 'Benton Primrose' (not available elsewhere) and 'Benton Evora'. Please get in touch with Pauline Byford and she will tell you where help is needed (see her email and telephone address at the end of this Journal). All we ask is at least one hour of your time in return for free entry.

Best wishes for a very happy and prosperous new year.

*Stop press: Stan Turner, one of our Plant Sale Committee members, suggested we ask a friend of his, Lyn Cornforth, to become our Treasurer. Lyn has kindly agreed to do so and in due course will have a meeting with Justine for a handover of the accounts and other documents. Thank you Stan for this introduction. Lyn's details appear on page 37.*

## TREASURER'S REPORT

*JUSTINE CORNEY*

This will sadly be my last report for the newsletter. As many of you are aware I stood down at the AGM in November 2009 due to increasing commitments to other charities and my work as a Public Governor at West Suffolk Hospital. The accounts are now in a very satisfactory state and over my period with the Group since January 2005 we have given £14,000 to support National Office. Our bank balances have also increased from £7,788 at 31 October 2004 to £14,206 at 31 October 2009.

I shall still hope to see members at the plant sales and other meetings and I wish my successor good luck. Good wishes to all.

# PLANT COLLECTIONS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

*CHRISTINE MOLE*

**I**n August last year all the Collection Holders gathered together for a meeting at Ickworth Park hosted by Sean Reid, courtesy of the National Trust, and attended by Mercy Morris the Plant Conservation Officer at national office. It was the usual good opportunity to meet each other and discuss mutual topics of interest. We considered how to raise awareness of the Suffolk Collections. We are hoping to focus on one or two Collections each year, (see the feature by Robert Grimsey on his collection of *Aesculus* in this issue). Most Collections are in good order, the Hibiscus collection will be moved from its present location to a site in Pettistree in late February. But I am sorry to have to report that Rougham Hall Nurseries have resigned from holding collections of Delphinium and Ribes

I hope you have been listening to Lesley Dolphin interviewing Collection Holders on her programme for Radio Suffolk; it has been a weekly slot on a Tuesday afternoon

Our marquee at the Autumn Plant Sale was great success as it enabled us to display lots of plant material from the collections - with especial thanks to Sean Reid, Rupert Eley and Sue Wooster for bringing Buxus, Euonymus and Alpine Campanulas respectively.

Over the last three years the Suffolk Group has been involved in the rescue of the late Dennis Baker's collection of Korean Chrysanthemums. He bred a number of his own and also rescued cultivars from Orpington Nurseries when it closed. In 2006 Ivan Dickings and I started the rescue operation.

The plants were given a temporary home in Ivan's garden where they were repotted and treated for fungal diseases, and then went to Harvey's Garden Plants, where they were split up and increased. In October 2008 some plants were taken to spend the winter with the Malmaison Carnations, for propagation the following spring. Young plants went Judy Barker's collection of hardy Chrysanthemums in London Colney, Hertfordshire. Most of the collection went to the Walled Garden at Wimpole Hall (National Trust, Cambridgeshire). In late October last year Ivan Dickings, Maggie Thorpe and I went to see the Chrysanthemum border there. They looked magnificent in large blocks of colour against the backdrop of a wall. I recommend a visit this autumn.

The Suffolk plant collections will be 'out and about' again this year. Mickfield Hostas are showing in the Plant Heritage Marquee at Hampton Court and Malmaison Carnations will be in the Floral Marquee; lots of collections will be on display at one or both of our plant fairs at Helmingham Hall; Robert Grimsey will be opening his Aesculus Collection for two weekends in May (8/9 and 15/16) and you can look in your copy of the National Plant Collections Directory to find out the opening arrangements of all 650 collections nationwide - 11 of which are in Suffolk

## SUFFOLK'S NATIONAL COLLECTIONS

AESCULUS	Bury St. Edmunds	Robert Grimsey, 01728 685203
BUXUS	Bury St. Edmunds	National Trust Ickworth Park, 01284 735819
CAMPANULA	Bury St. Edmunds	Sue Wooster, 07879 644958
DIANTHUS (Malmaison)	Ipswich	Jim Marshall, 01473 822400
EQUISETUM	Stowmarket	Anthony Pigott, 01449 766104
ERYSIMUM	Walpole	Dr.Simon Weeks, 01986 784348
EUONYMUS	East Bergholt	Rupert Eley, 01206 299224
HIBISCUS	Woodbridge	John Woods Nurseries 01394 386914
HOSTA	Stowmarket	Mickfield Hostas. 01449 711576
IRIS	Ipswich	Sarah Cook, 01473 822400
(Sir Cedric Morris introductions)		
SYRINGA	Stowmarket	Norman's Farm, 01449 781081

## DON'T PANIC: PROPAGATION OFFICER'S REPORT

*ROBERT SHEPPERSON*

**H**ave you ever experienced one of those dreadful heart-sinking moments when you suddenly remember something you should have done, but haven't? This story goes back to early 2007 when I thought that it might be worth buying a bulk order of the excellent *Iris Siberica* varieties being

offered by the wholesale nursery we use. They were cheap, easy to grow, and some unusual varieties were available. "Perhaps we could use one of these to produce our own free plant" I mused.

The Suffolk Group committee shared my misguided enthusiasm for producing almost 1000 plants of one variety to be delivered to the public all on one day at the spring plant sale. After trialling we decided on the *Iris Sibirica* Roanoake's Choice as the free plant for the 2009 spring plant sale a full 16 months hence. This delay is where I made the fatal mistake.

Ten months later on a dank December day I sit at the computer idling away when an e-mail from our publicity officer Widget catches my eye like a laser. "Do you have the photograph of the free plant?" she asks "I need to start promoting the plant sale".

What! What photo? Free plant? - I haven't even ordered the things yet, in fact I haven't spoken to the supplier since 2007. Help! Committee probably imagine that there are 1000 *Iris* plants potted up on the allotment in readiness for the plant sale. What if the plant isn't available, I can't check, I haven't even got their current catalogue!

I phoned the suppliers the next morning who confirmed that they were offering it next year, quoting a keen price. Things were looking up; the plants would arrive in mid February, we would pot them up, and I would water them through to May 31st, easy. Confident that another crisis had been averted I breathed more easily and got on with looking forward to Christmas.

The 2009 growing season began with a thump as the courier dumped two wine case sized boxes on my doorstep labelled '850 Roanoakes Choice.' "That's a lot of plants" I thought. A couple of days later PH member Anne Tweddle and our chairman Margaret Thorpe joined me for a potting session. In one afternoon we dealt with about half of them. The remainder I completed over that following week. It is surprising how fast you become with practice; in the last hour I was potting one every 40 seconds.

So there they stood all neat and tidy and brim full of promise. The following weeks were encouraging as the plants began to show signs of early growth. March and April were dry and sunny, but five weeks before the sale the weather turned wetter. I began to notice an increasing number of plants displaying shrivelling leaves. Losses began to mount and my regular calculations of how many would be left at current loss rates were becoming a concern

A week further on and arrangements for delivery of the Irises to the public were at an advanced state. A supply of labels had been printed, transportation was in hand and a small army of willing helpers ready to

hand out the plants to the ticket holders on the day. Meanwhile back on my allotment I was staring down a gun barrel called Botrytis: A combination of the weather change and my over zealous watering was threatening a horticultural holocaust courtesy of fungal rot at the bases of the Iris leaves.

Aghast I considered the consequences; This was serious, somewhere in the order of 10000 leaflets plus numerous press releases, posters and other promotional tools had been spread to all corners of the county and beyond, all of them shouting Free Plant in big bold letters across the top.

A local expert diagnosed “Definitely Botrytis or something like it; your compost is too wet. A fungicide might help but could be a waste of time. The weather will have a significant impact - they should be okay if it stays fine.”

A couple of dry sunny days followed so I contented myself by moving the plants into the brightest and breeziest location on the plot and tried not to worry. Then came the morning of the lousy weather forecast and I cracked. In less than two hours the whole lot were under cover. By midday they had been sprayed and the weakest plants gathered together near the west opening to benefit from maximum ventilation.

“Crikey, this is getting ridiculous”, I thought and resolved there and then to stay off the plot for a week. Six days later I steeled myself for a visit to the plot, rehearsing yet again in my mind the excuses I could use; “It was the weather; they sent diseased stock; my marriage is breaking up; I have clinical intermittent amnesia so I forgot what to do.” None true of course but might be worth a try.

With growing trepidation I peered into the tunnel anticipating carnage. But no! The gamble had paid off! Close inspection revealed little of the visible fungal growth remaining. The compost was clearly drier, and there were only a handful of further losses all confined to the group of weaker plants. The vast majority of our *Iris Siberica* Roanoake's Choice looked as though they were going to make it through to the plant sale.

All that now remained was some very cautious watering and the weeding out of a few remaining losses. The committee had asked for 800 and I had counted out 836 as they were moved from the tunnel onto the trailer to go to Helmingham. I would have to call that a result.

After watching the trailer disappear round the bend I turned and danced around the poly-tunnel punching the air like a teenager at a rock concert. But I vowed never to volunteer for anything ever again. At least nothing involving the production of a large number of one particular type of plant, for delivery on one date, to one customer, in one place. Not ever ...



# MEMBERSHIP REPORT - 1

*PAULINE BYFORD, SUFFOLK GROUP MEMBERSHIP OFFICER*

All charities have found 2009 a very difficult time to recruit new members and despite a very successful spring plant sale we did not manage to recruit any. However we did better at the autumn sale where five new members joined, while one transfer and two from the National Office brought our total to eight. People do seem to be more relaxed now and we hope that 2010 will be a better year.

Many gardeners do not understand the importance of the Plant Collections. Please try to bring guests to our events as this gives us an opportunity to encourage them to understand and maybe even join us.

I have not got all your current e-mail addresses as several emails bounced back when I sent them. Please could you ALL send me an email at pabyford@btinternet.com so I can check that the database is up to date.

# MEMBERSHIP REPORT - 2

*GILLIAN SPENCER, PLANT HERITAGE MEMBERSHIP ADMINISTRATOR*

Income from membership is a core part of our funding and in 2008/9 accounted for 51% of our national income (this includes Gift Aid reclaim). We return 17% of the total membership income to the local groups to support conservation activities in their area. However membership numbers are falling, in line with many other organisations. To redress this balance and put us back on track with the membership levels of November 2008, the Board has set a target of 4,600 members by 1 November 2010.

Recruitment via the groups will be vital to achieving this figure and we hope that you will continue to promote Plant Heritage through your group activities and the persuasive powers of your members. The target of 4,600 has been split across the groups according to their size thereby giving you a target figure for membership in order to help achieve the total.

As at 1 November 2009 Suffolk membership was 267 and the group's target figure for this November is 290.

# SUFFOLK GROUP EVENTS

## JANUARY

Saturday 30, 2.30pm Sarah Cook 'Cedric Morris's Irises'  
Stowupland Village Hall 01473 652587 \*-

## FEBRUARY

Saturday 27, 2.30pm Dr Andrew Ward of Norwell Nurseries and  
Gardens, Newark 'Wonderful Woodlanders'  
Stowupland Village Hall \*

## MARCH

Saturday 13, 1.30pm Propagation Day. General spring division and  
repotting. Robert Shepperson's allotment,  
Worlingworth. *Ring Robert on 01728 628415 if  
you intend to go.*

Saturday 27, 2.30pm Dr Chris Grey-Wilson 'Pulsatillas'  
Stowupland Village Hall \*

## MAY

Saturday 22, 2.30pm Yvonne and David Leonard, Crosshills, Field  
Road, Mildenhall IP28 7AL (01638 712742).  
Garden visit. Specialities Verbascum and Cistus.  
£3 per person (for NGS)

Sunday 30,  
10.30am-4pm Spring Plant Fair, Helmingham Hall, nr Ipswich

## JUNE

Saturday 19, 2.30 pm Brenda and John Foster, Gable House, Halesworth  
Road, Redisham NR34 8NE (01502 575298).  
Garden Visit. £4 per person

Saturday 26, 1.30pm Propagation Day. Cuttings, repottings, etc.  
Robert Shepperson's allotment, Worlingworth.  
*Ring Robert on 01728 628415 if you intend to go.*

## JULY

Saturday 3, 2.30pm Bernard Tickner, Fullers Mill, West Stow, Bury St  
Edmunds IP28 6HD (01284 728248). Garden visit.

## SEPTEMBER

Saturday 11, 2.30 pm Sue Martin of Frittenden, Cranbrook, Kent  
'Geums' Stowupland Village Hall \*

Sunday 30,  
10.30am-4pm

Autumn Plant Fair, Helmingham Hall, nr Ipswich

## **NOVEMBER**

To be arranged

Suffolk Group Annual General Meeting

*Lectures marked \* are free to members, with £3 entrance for non-members*

## **OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Sunday 21 February 11-4pm Snowdrop and Hellebore Day  
Gable House, Redisham, Beccles NR34 8NE 01502 575298

Sunday 28th March National Collection of Alpine Campanulas,  
Langham Hall Walled Garden, Langham Hall, Suffolk IP31 3EE  
07879 644958

Sunday 25 April National Collection of Erysimum  
Oak Cottage, Halesworth Road, Walpole, Suffolk IP19 9AZ 01986 784348

Fridays from 2 April to end September 10-5 The Lucy Redman School of  
Gardening, 6 The Village, Rushbrooke, Bury St. Edmunds IP30 OER  
01284 286250

Sunday 2 May National Collection of Erysimum (see above)

8-9 May and 15-16 May National Collection of Aesculus, Corner View,  
Clowes Corner, Ashfield-cum-Thorpe, Stowmarket Suffolk IP14 6ND  
01728685203

Sunday 6 June Gable House (see above) in aid of NGS

Sunday 5 September Autumn bulbs and perennials. Gable House (see above)

## **PLANT HERITAGE NORFOLK GROUP**

**O**ur neighbours the Norfolk Group have an action-packed programme of events for the spring and summer, including a talk by Jaime Blake on his late father-in-law Alan Bloom, Scilla Latham, garden historian, talking about the renovation of the Wilderness at Blickling Hall, a visit to the National Collection of Muscari, a Plant Fair on 2nd May and an evening walk near Blakeney focussing on salt marsh plants. For more details visit the Norfolk page on [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com) or contact Kathy Gray on 01328 701839 [kathygray@aol.com](mailto:kathygray@aol.com)

# WHAT HAVE PLANTS EVER DONE FOR US?

**SARAH MATTOCKS**

Everything! according to Dr. Timothy Walker, Director of the University of Oxford Botanic Gardens and our guest speaker on 24th October last year. So began a talk packed full of facts and information which left the audience somewhat punch drunk at the end. It is an extremely complex subject .....

“Plants are unique in that they photosynthesize, taking energy from the sun to make 'stuff'. We are entirely dependent on plants for our needs - without them we'd be up a gum tree.” Dr. Walker attempted to provide us with a brief history of life on earth and whether you are in the 'seven days' or 'Big Bang' camp, the evolution of life happened once and was an extraordinary event. Apparently the fashionable idea is that life emerged from under rock deep in the water - stromatolites in Western Australia formed 3,800 million years ago include some of the most ancient records of life on earth. These are layered structures formed by the trapping, binding and cementation of sedimentary grains of biofilms of micro-organisms, especially cyanobacteria (commonly known as blue-green algae).

Land plants evolved from algae dwelling in shallow fresh water. Initially these plants were similar to liverworts and mosses and had no roots. Soil

HELP NEEDED!

for our Spring Plant Fair  
at Helmingham Hall  
on Sunday 30 May

Volunteers are needed at the gate, free plant table, questionnaire  
desk and members'

gazebo. If you can spare an hour or so please  
contact Pauline Byford 01284 762628,  
pabyford@btinternet.com

Helpers get free entry to the sale and  
Helmingham Gardens.

accumulated over tens of millions of years and it was hugely important for plants to get roots down, providing anchorage and a source of water and nutrients from the soil. The plants were/are the “green glue” which sticks the soil to the land. Early land plants reproduced in the fashion of ferns by spores. Millions of years ago 'ferns' evolved which produced seeds. Not only was the emergence of seeds very important for plants (as it ensured their survival) but also hugely important for animals/humans.

The last glacier drew back 20,000 years ago; 2,500 years later there was another ice age and then an incredible increase in temperature. Since 11,500 years ago temperature has remained fairly constant and man gradually learned about his plants, manipulating and domesticating new plants, resulting in the emergence of agriculture

- G 8,000 years ago in China - rice and hemp
- G 5,500 years ago in Central America - maize thus providing starch for industry as well as animal and human food;
- G 4,500 years ago in Pakistan - cotton;
- G 3,000 years ago in Africa - sorghum and coffee and in New Guinea - sugar cane

Many plants have been used to produce drugs to fight cancer, Alzheimer's and other diseases, for example snowdrops (*Galanthamine*), yew (*Taxol*) and the Madagascan periwinkle, *Catharanthus roseus*, (Vincristine). Humans continue to manipulate plants in order to breed new material for the future to meet their needs. Nowadays this may mean genetic modification which can send some people into a panic. Bananas are a very important crop but they do not produce seeds. The only way to produce virus-free bananas is by genetic modification (GM). Dr. Walker raised three questions which need to be asked when considering GM crops:-

- G Does the crop escape?
- G Does the crop hybridize with UK natives?
- G Does the pollen go far?

In the case of oil seed rape the answer to the first question is yes, so it is not suitable for GM. However, sweetcorn barely fertilises itself, let alone hybridizing with natives, so it is a suitable for GM. So why is conservation of plants important? Dr. Walker offered three reasons

- G ecological - they provide the “green glue”
- G economic
- G ethical/spiritual

In April, 2002 over 180 countries backed the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation at the Convention of Biological Diversity. This recognised that up to two thirds of the world's plants could be threatened by the end of

this century unless urgent steps are taken to safeguard tens of thousands of species. There are five areas of targets, full details of which can be found at [www.plants2010](http://www.plants2010). A number of countries have already developed their own national plant conservation strategies. The UK's strategy is sponsored by the government and was devised by Plantlife in association with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

You too can do your bit for biodiversity and enjoy yourself at the same time - buy wine in bottles with cork stoppers rather than plastic! Cork oaks (*Quercus suber*) form part of a fragile ecosystem in the Mediterranean. Use wood from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) sources, use native reed for thatching rather than importing and if you are fortunate to own woodland - coppicing encourages insects and fungi.

Finally, Dr. Walker raised the question of a connection between poverty and threatened species. It is certainly true that great swathes of rainforest are cleared for lucrative production of cash crops. However, in the past we in the west did the same when clearing woodland and planting crops. Dr. Walker said that children in poorer countries are often closer to nature through their own food production and cited the example of children in Columbia who have made their own botanic garden.

It is good to know that by belonging to Plant Heritage which seeks to conserve, document, promote and make available garden plants for the benefit of everybody, we are contributing to plant biodiversity and indeed are part of the global programme for plant conservation.

## **VISIT THE PLANT DOCTORS .. at the Spring Plant Fair**

Do you have some plant problems or problem plants? Bring them along to the Plant Heritage Plant Fair at Helmingham Hall on 30 May, and our team of expert plant doctors will be there to help.

Sarah Cook, former head gardener at Sissinghurst, Ivan Dickings, RHS committee member (and Suffolk Group president) and Jim Marshall, former National Trust Gardens Advisor, will be at the Plant Heritage membership tent between 12 and 2 pm to offer advice and (sometimes!) cures.

# HAIRY ROOTS AND COMPLEX CHEMICALS

ANNE TWEDDLE

Peter Wilson is a man with a passion for plants, science and the law. His gift for turning highly complex science and its processes into something accessible and popular was very apparent during the talk he gave at the recent Plant Heritage Suffolk Group AGM.

His first career was in plant sciences. Plants are high-value compounds in the food and pharmaceutical industries due to their natural ability to produce complex chemicals that are hard to make synthetically. 25% of prescription drugs contain active plant ingredients.

Peter's job was to help design a way of producing sufficient of these high-value compounds in the laboratory so he and his colleagues went on a hairy root journey. Hairy roots from plants contained quantities of the desired complex chemicals. How could the hairy roots be grown en masse, and without the plants? They cracked that question and then scaled the project up to increase the quantity of compound. A plant root bio-reactor was born. A fascinating journey, ending in masses of hairy roots producing complex compounds in large chambers.

At the end of this project, Peter decided on a change of career and became a patent attorney. Now he combines his first career with his second, and works on patent applications for new drugs.

Peter told us of a recent project, now published, where a new drug has been produced for the treatment of malaria. *Artemesia annua* is the plant at the heart of it. The fight against this disease now has a new weapon in its armoury. Malaria is a disease at arm's length to us in Europe, but to much of the world's poorer population it's a life-threatening condition. Every thirty seconds somewhere in the world, a child dies of malaria and there are over one million deaths annually. The new drug overcomes many of the old issues in treating malaria. This drug is administered under the tongue as a spray.

Peter and his partner Bruce's garden at North Lodge, Norwich, is open through the Yellow Book. The NGS guide book describes it:

*Town garden 0.1 acre to Victorian Gothic Cemetery Lodge (not open), created from a barren, challenging triangular plot over the past ten years. Strong structure and attention to internal vistas including a Gothic*

*conservatory, formal pond, pergola and classical-style summerhouse. Predominantly herbaceous planting. Adjacent associated historic parkland cemetery also worth a visit.*

For 2010 opening times see the National Garden Scheme website [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk). I visited their garden last summer and can recommend it.

## SUNDAY OUT IN NORWICH

SARAH COOK

Unlike Ipswich, Norwich may not have a great football team, but it certainly has some wonderful gardens. I am sure that those of you who came to our AGM last November will have been inspired not only by Peter Wilson's fascinating lecture but also to visit his garden next summer. I visited two other Norwich gardens last summer, both incredibly different but equally worth visiting. Add a restaurant, with a varied selection of food in a convenient location to these three gardens, all of which are open on a Sunday, and you have an action packed day out, not too far from home.

We started our day at the Plantation Garden, which is open from 9am. It is a gem of a Victorian town Garden, and perfectly described by its Patron Sir Roy Strong in his introduction to the guide as:

*'...middle class...something of a rarity, for in most cases it is usually only the grandest gardens which survive from earlier periods. But here is the folly of a self made cabinet maker, Henry Trevor, a garden in many ways over the top with its dramatic ascents and descents, its preposterous fountain and weird rock and brickwork. Henry Trevor emerges a mega-Mr Pooter, piling into his garden Gothic ruins, Italianate terracing and rustic grotto work besides the latest fashionable conifers, anything in fact to keep up with and indeed eclipse the Victorian Jones.'*

I know of nothing similar, and found it both surprising and charming. The garden was created from 1855 in a disused quarry, it was maintained for about 30 years after Trevor's death in 1897, but steadily declined after 1930. It was rescued in 1980 by the Plantation Garden Preservation Trust who have carried out and are continuing a programme of restoration and maintenance.

The second garden was a complete contrast, The Exotic Garden, created by the artist and photographer Will Giles, is very much a Twenty First Century



garden. I would describe it as fashionably full of tropical plants, but this does not do any justice to the imaginative use of flowering and, particularly, foliage plants, both tender and hardy brought together to give a brilliant, jewelled, jungle effect.

I hope to visit both of these again next summer, on one of the Sundays when Peter Wilson's garden at North Lodge is also open. There are several other gardens to visit in Norwich which I have not yet seen, including the Bishop's House. Most can be found in the 'Yellow Book' and I am hoping that John Kelf, whose 'Jungle Garden' was featured on Gardeners World last September will soon be opening a garden to the public again. In fact I may need two days to cover them all. Oh, and I nearly forgot, the ideal place to lunch, within walking distance of the Exotic Garden, why of course it must be 'Yellows' - Delia Smiths restaurant in the South West corner of the Carrow Road stadium!!

*Information - please check opening times*

*The Plantation Garden - open daily from 9am, is on Earlham Road, next to the Catholic Church; parking on Sundays is allowed in the bus lane opposite; [www.plantationgarden.co.uk](http://www.plantationgarden.co.uk)*

*The Exotic Garden - Thorpe Road, open late June to late October, Sunday afternoons only; [www.exoticgarden.com](http://www.exoticgarden.com)*

*North Lodge - Bowthorpe Road, see the Yellow Book for opening details.*

*Yellows - NCFC Carrow Road Stadium; [www.yellowsdiner.com](http://www.yellowsdiner.com) 01603 218704*

## PLANT HERITAGE NEWS

For an update on what's happening at National Office visit the current issue of Newslines on the website [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com)

To find out more about the Suffolk Group's activities visit our website [www.nccpgsuffolk.org](http://www.nccpgsuffolk.org)

# WRAGS - A CAREER IN HORTICULTURE

*ANNA NIGHTINGALE*

The Women's Farm and Garden Association is a charity which was founded in 1899 to provide education and employment opportunities for women in horticulture, and its key aims have indeed remained training, employment and advancement for those working on the land. Many of its founder members were professional women working in farming, gardening and education who were concerned about the lack of opportunities for women in horticulture at the time.

Over the years the Association's members have included some of the most noted gardeners of their day including that doyenne of the herbaceous border Gertrude Jekyll, Eve Balfour (founder of The Soil Association), Beatrix Havergal (founder of Waterperry School of Horticulture) and Louisa Wilkins who is credited with founding the Women's Land Corp in WWI. The first president of the Association was Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll and in 1959 Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, paid a visit on the Diamond Jubilee.



In accordance with its key aims, the Association has been responsible for many schemes and opportunities over the years including an employment bureau, an outfit department, the Land Army, a Smallholdings Project, a garden apprenticeship for school leavers and, now, the Women Returners to Amenity Gardening Scheme (WRAGS). This scheme began in 1993 when the need for a training programme for older students was recognised and it is targeted particularly at those considering a change of career into horticulture.

Training is offered in practical skills in private and public gardens under the supervision of a knowledgeable garden owner or head gardener for 15 hours a week over a 12 month period (Prince Charles is a Garden Owner on the Scheme). A small training allowance is paid to the trainee to cover expenses, and trainees are also able to attend workshops and workdays organised throughout the United Kingdom by the Association.

In some cases, at the end of the 12 month period, the trainee may be offered a job in the garden where she has worked, and she will also be

eligible for the Christine Ladley Fund which supports those who wish to further their education, learn specialist skills or help in community projects.

If, as the RHS claims, something like two thirds of the students on its foundation level courses is female, I'm surprised more of us have not heard of the Women's Farm and Garden Association, especially as it has such an illustrious pedigree. I only stumbled across it by accident when I read an article in The English Garden and the featured gardener mentioned that she had been a WRAGS trainee. Even then, if I had not recently found myself with time on my hands, I might not have looked any further but I'm glad I did because I am now a WRAGS trainee too.

I work two days a week at a private garden near Shotley alongside a head gardener with 30 years of practical gardening experience. The garden is divided into several walled areas. Those nearer the house are more formal with beds of lavender, roses, box hedging and topiary while further away from the house we grow vegetables and flowers for the house. As part of the scheme I keep a diary for each day I am at the garden and a monthly log which my WFGA co-ordinator will check every three months to ensure that I am covering everything.

There are three of us working in the garden, including the head gardener, and even at this time of year there is always something to do. When I first started in October the permanent gardeners had just begun clipping the box hedging which took us seven weeks to finish - I now know that only a garden designer who has never had to maintain it will tell you that box hedging is a low maintenance option! Since then I have been planting hyacinth bulbs and paper whites for the house on an industrial scale and learned how to take cuttings from lavender, geranium, pelargonium, lobelia and corydalis. Because of the sheer volume required, cuttings are taken wherever possible. We have also sown poppy seeds for the borders and planted out our broad beans and in the New Year I'll become an expert in double digging.

I'm also hoping to study for the RHS Level 2 Certificate next year but I'm pleased that I'm also a WRAGS trainee, in such a practical arena, as theory can only teach so much. I'm looking forward to backing the theory up with the practical experience of my head gardener and learning as I go.

If you are interested in learning more about the Women's Farm and Garden Association, either as a Trainee or a Garden Owner wishing to join the scheme, more information can be found at [www.wfga.org.uk](http://www.wfga.org.uk).

The Association is always looking for gardens (as well as trainees) to participate in the scheme and, just in case you were wondering, don't be put off by the name.....they do let men join!



Clockwise from top left:

Chrysanthemum border in the walled garden at Wimpole Hall; the plants were rescued by various members of the Suffolk Group and Philip Waites, head gardener (*page 5*). Photo courtesy National Trust/Penny James.

Robert Grimsey and some of his Aesculus Collection (*page 27*);

Lucy Redmond's garden opening (*page 33*);

The Exotic Garden in Norwich photographed by Sarah Cook (*page 16*).





# HONOURING THE BRIEF

*SUE BURTON*

**A**n interesting day at Trinity Park for a seminar titled ‘Gardens Beyond The Drawing Board’ turned out to provide a bonus above and beyond the three fascinating talks. Nicholas Newton, Sarah Cook and Bunny Guinness spoke to the theme of ‘Honouring the Brief’. In the lunch interval I wandered around the stalls outside the hall, stopping to admire landscape architect Ruth Elwood's photographs of gardens she had designed. Encouraged to enter my name into a draw for a free consultation in my own garden, I duly complied, and then forgot about the whole thing.

A couple of days later an email dropped into my inbox telling me that I was the lucky winner, and that Ruth would come over to review my garden needs, whether these were to do with planting layouts, revitalising a mature garden or redesigning it from scratch or as a blank canvas.

I began to think. Did I actually want a designer for my garden, and if so would it be the whole plot or simply parts of it? Was it a question of revitalising, or just a bit of reorganisation? What was missing? What didn't work? I could bore for Britain on fourteenth century Italian painting, but a garden designer I am not. I decided that I had nothing to lose by talking to Ruth and she duly arrived one soggy, grey November morning when the garden was, shall we say, not looking its best.



We started at the most unattractive end. Here near the road are a battered laurel hedge constantly splattered with spray from the beet lorries, the compost bins, a bit of scraggy grass, the vegetable plots and the asparagus bed. The bonfire is here, a neglected plum tree... it's an area we do not think about much because it's so hard to know where to start sorting it out. It took Ruth about one minute to assess the situation and then I was frantically scribbling down her ideas on my pad. I could hardly keep up. "Cut the laurel to one foot and let it regenerate. Thicken up the hedging in three layers using beech and an alternative variety of laurel, do away with the grass that isn't growing properly and is making grass cutting awkward around the tree trunks, extend the shady soil areas with mass planting of *Hellebores*, *Lamium*, *Alchemilla*, *Cornus*, *Fatsia*, more *Euphorbia*, edge the vegetable and asparagus beds with box, make a proper path down the side of the bed parallel to the road, remove the plum and plant a new one elsewhere."

The tour continued around the rest of the garden. I explained that the seating/eating area wasn't working well, we felt too exposed. "Enclose the circular lawn by extending the existing small beech and hornbeam hedge leaving a gap for the wheelbarrow. Grass over one of the two beds by the path and extend the paving, moving the plants to a new bed to match the surviving one."

By this time I couldn't wait to get going. And I had begun to grasp that someone with a fresh pair of eyes, and a talent for seeing the bigger picture, could have ideas for crucial improvements that, while involving a bit of work, are perfectly realisable.

Ruth is a chartered landscape architect with horticultural qualifications rather than a straightforward garden designer. She brings an understanding of the symbiosis of a garden, and includes in her vision the trees, the aspect, the soil, the views and the relationship with the landscape outside the garden. She tackles projects from tiny gardens to big estates, so the first thing she establishes is the level of client involvement, maintenance and kind of garden her clients are after. "The finished project should fit like a glove into a client's lifestyle."

The garden can be blitzed for a complete redesign, or tackled in parts and she is totally flexible about the amount of input required from her by the client. I found that this service is indeed 'honouring the brief' for anyone considering asking for a bit of help with making subtle or indeed grand alterations to their garden.

*Ruth can be contacted on 01449 768828 or [team@e-l-d.co.uk](mailto:team@e-l-d.co.uk), [www.e-l-d.co.uk](http://www.e-l-d.co.uk).*

*Left: Example of a garden designed by Ruth Elwood.*

# IN AND OUT OF THE GARDEN

NATALIE FINCH

I n January I am more out of the garden than in it, lingering indoors gazing out of my kitchen window at the bare branches of a huge oak tree etched against the winter sky. When I venture out I will find the Christmas box, *Sarcococca confusa*, starting to flower about Twelfth Night. The flowers are scented, and nice for arranging, they go well with iris *unguicularis* which is also scented. This iris blooms all winter in mild weather. It is best planted hard in poor dry soil at the bottom of a sunny wall, mine faces west.

Winter aconites come next

*"With buttercup flowers which shut at night  
And green leaves frilling round their necks of gold  
Like tender maidens muffled from the cold".*

They look charming arranged on a saucer so that you can look down at the golden flowers with their green ruff. The flowers will open slowly revealing their golden stamens.

The long bed of hellebores beside my drive delights me in February. They grow well in shade, but are just as happy in full sun. They come in many colours from pale yellow through pink and white to deepest purple. I have underplanted them with primroses, pulmonarias and the feathery white and purple flowers of *corydalis solida*.

These complement the hellebores, particularly the very dark flowers which tend to get lost against the black earth. *Corylopsis pauciflora*, a densely branched shrub with primrose yellow scented flowers associates well with hellebores, and blooms at the same time.

Coming in and out of my back door in March, I am pleased by wafts of vanilla scent. This is from *Azara microphylla* which is an elegant small tree. It has large sprays of dainty evergreen foliage and yellow scented flowers on the underside of the twigs. I grow it as a wall shrub by the back door, so that I can enjoy its fragrance. It has been very happy in this situation. It needs regular pruning to keep it in shape.

*Schimidsu sakura*, a beautiful Japanese cherry, tempts me outside repeatedly in April. I was advised to plant it after the hurricane of 1987 by a knowledgeable gardening friend. It was a happy choice. It is a small tree with wide spreading branches forming a broad flattened crown. The large



frilled double flowers of pink tinted in bud and open to pure white. They hang all along the branches in long stalked clusters. Because it is a small tree, I can stand under it, even after 20 years, admiring the flowers at eye level.

*“Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide”.*

*Rosa chinensis mutabilis* flowers in May, and will bloom until November. I am very fond of this china rose. It grows well here tolerating, even enjoying, the light soil in my garden. The flowers which look like butterflies are in two shades from peacock to pink and bloom profusely all summer. This rose needs careful pruning to keep it rejuvenated and in shape. It makes a lot of dead wood, but it is easy to prune, and is a pleasant task, as while you are doing it you can inspect the flowers at close range.

In June the garden is full of roses, growing into trees, and parties, in the flowerbeds, on the drive, into the hedges, wherever they will. This is the time to be outside appreciating the great wafts of scent drifting around the garden.

I have always liked cutting a few roses from chosen bushes, and I put them into glasses in the house near where I am working, so that I can get to know them better. A favourite is the beautiful damask Mme Hardy. It is strongly scented with a pure white fully double flower. The centre petals are folded inward exposing a rich green eye. Gruss an Aachen dating from 1909 is another one to watch unfolding in a glass. The flowers are shapely and semi-double, the colour ivory tinged with pink, a truly luscious rose. Sometimes I am asked why I lavish so much care on the old-fashioned roses with their shorter season. Their brevity and beauty are part of their charm. “Beauty doesn't linger, it only visits”.

By the first of July the garden can look a little tired, with the freshness of May and June gone for ever. It is important to cut down all the earlier spent flowers to give the later ones a chance to be seen. In July my bog bed becomes an interesting feature. I dug it out over 20 years ago, to the depth of a spade and a half, and lined it with sand. I then laid perforated pond liner on top of the sand (the holes for drainage) to hold the moisture in. It has been very successful.

I grow *astilbe*, *phlox*, *monarda*, *primula florindae* and other plants that would not thrive otherwise. The bog bed is very colourful and scented in July. I like to pick the phlox to put in a jug in the house, because the scent reminds me of my Irish childhood - damp gardens full of the scent, where rain was never a problem!

In August the garden is full of *Thalictrum dipterocarpum* which does need careful staking when it starts to grow in May, but it more than repays the trouble in August with its tiny sprays of tall gypsophila like flowers floating in an area way all around the garden, it is a foil for the many silver leaved plants I grow.

The nights are starting to draw in by September, but the days are warm and the asters, particularly *Aster frikartii* and *Aster ericoides* have a long flowering period, and I find them very appealing. I also like *Caryopteris clandonensis* which some people call the blue spiraea which I have planted as a hedge around the edge of a flower bed. With its silver leaves and blue flowers, it makes a nice feature and is the September garden. There is a form called *Caryopteris* 'Worcester Gold' with blue flowers and golden leaves which has grown well here. These are woody shrubs and need careful pruning after flowering.

If October is chilly, there is a tendency to be more out of the garden than in it. However, on sunny mellow October days, the garden still looks colourful. *Callicarpa bodinieri* with its rose madder foliage and charming purple berries makes a splash of soft colour, and the berries look very pretty in a vase indoors. Tall white *Cimicifuga simplex* 'Elstead' variety looks striking in front of the callicarpa - by the way you need to plant more than one to get those purple berries. Then there are the nerines, pink and lacy. Provided they are planted not too deep in a sunny place they will flower until the frosts. They are very easy to arrange and last a long time indoors.

When dark November comes it is time for hard work mulching the beds which is best done after heavy rain to retain moisture. Now is the time to cut away all the straggly old hellebore foliage so that you can clearly see the new flowers in spring. The little white flowers of *Viburnum Tinus* looked charming in a silver mug. If the weather is mild, the yellow flowers of *coronilla glauca* will scent a whole room especially in the evening.

I come in from the garden about 20th November first having cut a substantial amount of holly and ivy. I retire indoors to make the Christmas wreaths which I have done for over 20 years. People say "what hard work", but it's not really, I'm used to it.

It's actually very nice to come in out of the cold, and with the kitchen table covered with holly and ivy, the garden seems to have come in with me! I retire utterly from the garden and enjoy the break until about 20th January when the first aconites and snowdrops exert their fateful spell and lure me out again.

# CONQUERING THE CONKERS!

ROBERT GRIMSEY, NATIONAL COLLECTION HOLDER OF *AESCULUS*

I all started more than 18 years ago when I was given five young grafted plants of *Aesculus* by the eminent plantsman and plant propagator extraordinaire Ivan Dickings AHRHS (President of Suffolk Plant Heritage). Before receiving these young plants my knowledge of *Aesculus* (Horse Chestnuts and Buckeyes) really only encompassed the few varieties grown by the nursery on which I was working at the time, and the two - *A. hippocastanum* and *A. parviflora* - featured in my then young garden.

Bearing in mind that back in those days there was no such thing as the internet I started to research the plants that had been gifted to me. Whilst most of them featured in books in my own library, information on each seldom stretched to more than a couple of lines.

My studies included a number of visits to the RHS Lindley Library at Vincent Square, where I started to find out more about my fascinating acquisitions. I was returning to Suffolk with reams of photocopies taken from reference books. In 1991 there were just 34 *Aesculus* listed in Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs, then regarded by many as the most comprehensive

plant list in print! As time went on I became more and more interested in the genus not just on paper but in sourcing 'new' plants.

In early 1992 I made my first visits to a nursery called 'Pavia' (the name formerly given to some species of what are now all known as *Aesculus*) in Belgium which, whilst not exclusively specialising in *Aesculus*, they were definitely the main plant crop. My first trip resulted in me returning with about a dozen or so different plants, I was hooked! I started making regular trips to



Belgium to Dirk Benoit at Pavia, each time bringing back more species/varieties of *Aesculus*; by the end of 1993 I already had 53 different plants all growing on in pots. With so many plants to look after my collecting slowed for a few years with only a few additions over the next five years.

Mindful that there was 2.5 acres (about one hectare) of 'field' at the bottom of my garden which, by virtue of its size was becoming increasingly unworkable by ever larger agricultural machinery, I was delighted when my father agreed to transfer its ownership to me in about 1999. At last I had somewhere to establish my collection. The first instalment of planting took place in February 2000 when just over 60 species/cultivars were planted out. With information limited on so many of the plants I had, spacing and ultimate sizes was a very challenging issue. I was helped in part by having made visits to various gardens including Kew where I recorded the sizes (height/spread) of many of the mature plants I saw. This was a very helpful and worthwhile exercise although not entirely accurate as I am finding some are growing more or less than I had expected!

With the 'nursery' area of my garden somewhat depleted I was enthused to look for more plants for the collection and a further 18 were obtained during 2000/2001. As many of what I was now looking for were not in commercial production I was writing to gardens/arboreta seeking scions for grafting. I am indebted to Ivan Dickings who has received all sorts of packages from around the globe and grafted the scions onto rootstocks of *Aesculus hippocastanum* (common horse chestnut) for me. By 2001 my list of names stretched to over 100 different taxa.

In March of 2001 I was delighted when my collection was accredited 'National Collection' (R) status by the then NCCPG (now Plant Heritage).

Up until now most of my research had consisted of visits to the Lindley Library in London. However with advances in modern technology I was soon to have an internet connection at home. Many hours were spent on winter evenings doing searches for both varieties that I had still to find and also locating those with which I was not familiar. Each year a few more were obtained either as grafted plants or more usually scions for grafting. By 2005 my list of names was in excess of 120 in extent and increasingly I was finding that locating 'new' varieties was proving easier and that a small number of those I was still looking never seemed to materialise. Have these few been lost to cultivation?

In 2006 my confidence in the collection growing to maturity was dented by news of various pests and diseases specifically afflicting *Aesculus*, I have to say for a few months I did wonder if there was any point in carrying on with the collection. With so many people being negative about chestnuts at

that time I was all the more determined to continue to add more varieties. Meanwhile my collection continued to grow well albeit some doing much better than expected and others much less so, which was hardly surprising considering the wide geographic spread of the genus.

During 2009 I have done more extensive research on the internet working with various botanical institutions around the world and currently my list consists of over 150 different names. The taxonomy of the genus *Aesculus* is notoriously confused (ask any botanist) and many plants named as one thing in Europe are to be found under an alternative name in the US.

Whilst you may think this is an easy operation to sort out I can assure you that it becomes very confusing when plants that are supposedly synonymous turn out to be quite different!! In the next 12 months or so I am expecting to add upwards of a further 25 plants to the collection most of these will be grafted for me by Ivan. That will leave 12 to 15 types that remain unfound, six of which I have been looking for over many years and I expect in reality no longer exist, see below.

I am indebted to Margaret Thorpe and the Suffolk Group committee for the granting of 'monetary donations' to purchase additions for my collection some of which because of their rarity cost upwards of £75 per plant.

2010 will see the collection opened for public view for the first time whilst they are in flower. Planned openings are scheduled for the weekends of 8-9th and 15-16th May, these openings will be raising much needed funds to repair the roof of Ashfield Church. Between now and May '10 I am also planning to get the collection featured in various newspapers and horticultural publications, so watch this space as the saying goes!

I look forward to welcoming you to see the collection later this year.

HELP! The following varieties have so far eluded me, if anyone knows of the whereabouts I am definitely interested to know please!

*Aesculus x carnea* 'Pendula'

" 'Dirk Benoit'

" *hipp.* 'Nigra'

" *hipp.* 'Pendula'

" *x hybrida* var *purpurascens*

" *wilsonii* (seed raised plants)

" *hipp.* 'Albo-variegata'

" *hipp.* 'Domino'

*Robert can be contacted on 01728 685203.*

# EXCITING DISCOVERY AT HISTORIC GARDEN

*SEAN REID, HEAD GARDENER AT ICKWORTH HALL*

A mystery notebook packed full of unique garden history has been found buried at the back of a gardeners' shed at the National Trust's Ickworth estate. The notebook was found in an old filing cabinet containing weather records from 1902 and is thought to be the work of one of Ickworth's previous head gardeners. Its exact date and author is a mystery.

The notebook documents every variety of fruit tree that was planted here and where it was planted. There are over 200 varieties of local plum, gage, pear and apple trees, with entries from 1898-1930. Some of them we knew used to be here, but others like the Ickworth gage, and the Ickworth plum we didn't even know existed!

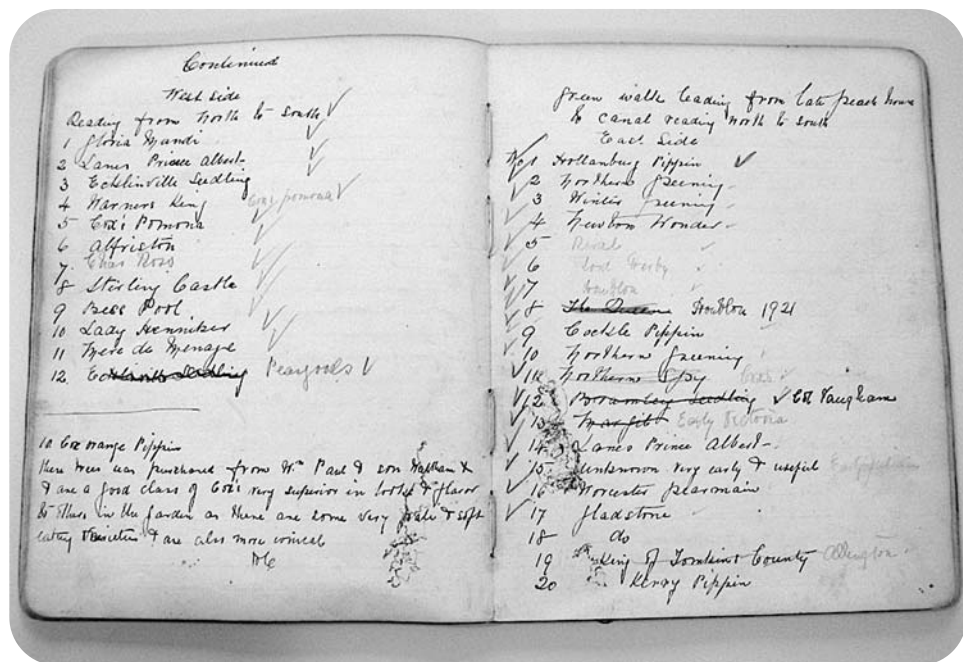
Most of the time, when you're working with historic gardens like this, you don't have much to go on, if anything. You have to make the best guess you can and hope that the plants you choose and where you plant them will work, both for the plants themselves and for the structure and appearance of the garden. We've wanted to reinstate some of the fruit trees here for a long time and were already in the process of deciding what to do when my colleague Cath Mobbs made this incredible discovery. It means that we don't have to make blind guesses and can now be really true to how Ickworth was created to be in future work. Any gardener would kill for this kind of information; it's amazing to think it's just been sitting there all these years.

The notebook was discovered when bad weather forced the gardeners inside for a big clear up of their sheds and cupboards. It has now been handed on to Chris Calnan, the Conservator for the East of England,



Sean Reid and mystery notebook.





who is assessing its condition. The other documents found with the notebook were very wet and mouldy, but incredibly, on first inspection, it looks like this notebook is in excellent condition for its age. We can't yet say exactly when it was written, but my best guess from some of the entries and the style of the binding is around 1910. You can see that it is the work of more than one hand, a kind of running account of what species have been planted, where they came from and how well they've done under the watchful eye of several different gardeners at Ickworth. It's also a very personal record of how the writers felt about the gardens and their jobs there. As you read the entries and see the species listed and scrubbed out at a later date you get a real sense of what kind of people used to work here.

The gardening team at Ickworth is now busily piecing together a much fuller picture of what Ickworth's gardens used to look like, before work starts to reinstate some of these original elements. Dorothy Cartwright, who volunteers for the National Trust at Ickworth (and is a member of Suffolk Plant Heritage) is painstakingly plotting the varieties onto an ordnance survey map of the gardens from the 1880's when the orchards were in their heyday, and research has begun to see if any of the heritage varieties mentioned in the notebook are still being grown in the UK's specialist fruit nurseries.

It is hoped that many of the fruit trees planted next autumn will be the varieties mentioned in the notebook. Visitors will be offered the chance to sponsor a tree, planting it themselves and returning to prune it under the knowledgeable eye of the gardeners.

We're keen to know more about the notebook's content and as part of Ickworth's massive Real Lives project ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk/reallives](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/reallives)) we'd love to hear from anyone who might have memories of, or be related to gardeners at Ickworth from 1900-1930. Please send any information to [RealLives@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:RealLives@nationaltrust.org.uk).

Excerpts from the notebook

*"Passe Colmar same treatment as above, a very useful pear about January & is much improved if ripened in a warmer place than the fruit room."*

*"Many of the old trees are real food varieties although they have lost their flavour through coming in contact with the subsoil which can be described in no better words than awful stuff. Another thing that has done a great deal of harm here in past years is the clipping quite up to the bole of the trees bruising every surface root if not killing it, compelling the trees to go below for peace sake. Why a crop is expected from a wall and no ground allowed for the roots of its occupant is more than I can understand. The reason that has been put to me by the old school is that it keeps the land clean for longer in the spring, that may be so but I prefer fruit to cleanliness if one if at the expense of the other."*

*"Only one variety was satisfactory so I decided to plant this wall with all Golden Droop plum. This was done Dec 19 1913 also that was the day the planting of the orchard at Horringer Hall (or Home Farm) was finished."*

Some varieties mentioned include: *Bearre Lanfalier, Slow Moreean, Jefferson, Blickling, Court of Wick, King of the Pippin, Hoary Morning, Lady Ludeley, Oullings Golden Gage, Lord Harvey.*

FRIENDS OF THE QUAY THEATRE

## **PLANT MARKET**

Monday 3 May 2010, 10 am

Market Hill Sudbury

To book a pitch phone 01787 374745



# MEMBER'S GARDEN OPEN

LUCY REDMAN

The village of Rushbrooke is within spitting distance of Bury St Edmunds but is also very quiet and peaceful. Dominic and I started creating the 0.75 acre garden here ten years ago, it's very much a family garden with functional but decorative features like Dominic's potager. This is based on a circle but has a copper seed pod in the centre which picks up the colourings of his brassicas perfectly!

I am a maximalist not minimalist plantsman so the garden is now choc-a-bloc with unusual plants such as *Polygonum scoparium*, *Sambucus* 'Linearis' and *Jasminum mesneyi*. Borders are either colour coordinated to match the room of the house from which they are viewed or have other themes like links to parts of the world that I am interested in such as Asia. So we have a 'Plants of Asian Origin' border - whose source was Roy Lancaster's book *Travels through China* - a place I dream of going to one day! We are slowly labelling all the plants which help the students who attend The Lucy Redman School of Garden Design whose courses are held in the sedum roofed pavilion in the garden.

We have used design ideas taken from garden history and given them a contemporary twist so instead of a traditional turf tree seat made from hazel we have used woven rusted metal. A stone parterre is replicated on the lawn taken from the 1930's gate design and links to the period of the thatched house.

There are several sculptures placed around the garden which are very much integral to the gardens design. Our lovely fat chickens are housed in the decorative Palais de Poulet but spend all their time scratching around and lovely lively children too! I am a great believer in the garden being a place to have fun expressing your creative and unique ideas, so we try to have no mass produced elements and love playing with recycled treasures.'

I love showing fellow plantsman around the garden and so we shall be opening from Easter Friday every Friday until the end of September from 10-5pm. Do come and enjoy a wander and spoil yourself with a nice cup of tea, a piece of cake and even a plant or two!

We are just finalising details to run a Garden Trail between probably five to six gardens/nurseries all within 30 minutes of each other every Friday (from Easter) so that planty people can have a lovely day wandering around being inspired. Among the gardens/nurseries will be Sue Wooster's

National Collection of Alpine Campanulas at Langham Walled Garden, Francine Raymond's Kitchen Garden and the wonderful garden at Wyken Vineyards. Please look at my website at the end of January when details will be finalised: [www.lucyredman.co.uk](http://www.lucyredman.co.uk)

*Garden open: Easter Friday - end September every Friday 10-5pm*

*The Lucy Redman School of Garden Design, 6 The Village, Rushbrooke, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 0ER. Tel : 01284 386 250*

## SUDBURY PLANT MARKET

*BRYAN THURLOW*

Sudbury's annual plant market has become a firm fixture for both nurseries and buyers since it began in 2002. It came about as a result of my love of plants and my involvement some years ago in fund-raising for The Quay Theatre in Sudbury where we used to stage small scale plant sales in the theatre car park.

The event has now moved to a more prominent position on Market Hill and grown considerably. For sellers most sales are made in the morning and early afternoon with eager customers arriving much earlier than the advertised start time of 10am. From the buyers' point of view there is a wide selection of quality plants to purchase from many good specialist nurseries, some of whom you will be familiar with from NCCPG plant sales.

We look forward to welcoming you on Bank Holiday Monday 3rd May..

## PEONY POSTSCRIPT

There's a follow-up to Anne Tweddle's fascinating article in the autumn 2009 edition of the Journal 'Between a Rockii and a Gansu'. As she related, the original *Peony* 'Highdown' died, but our president Ivan Dickings has come to the rescue.

In 2008 he visited Highdown, the famous chalk garden in Sussex formerly gardened by Sir Frederick Stern, and collected some scions of the peony.



Recently he presented a grafted plant from the original *P. rockii* to the garden manager of Highdown, Chris Beardsley, and also a plant of *P. Argosy* which was no longer in the garden. The photo above shows the historic hand-over.

## CALLING CLEMATIS FANS IN EAST ANGLIA

*JULIA THORNTON, PLANT HERITAGE ESSEX GROUP*

**T**he British Clematis Society does not have a group in our area, so Linda Crowther and I thought that we would start one. We would like to have talks, garden visits, coffee mornings, anything that you might enjoy, centred on Clematis. We have spoken to members of the main committee and also Sheila Chapman (a prominent clematis grower in Essex). If you are interested in being a founder member of the group, then please let either Linda or myself know. Subscription fee is yet to be arranged.

*Linda Crowther - [ljc.1@btinternet.com](mailto:ljc.1@btinternet.com) 01277 822883*

*Julia Thornton - [julia.thornton@gmail.com](mailto:julia.thornton@gmail.com) 01268 743898*

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Unusual Perennials      Garden Design  
Acclaimed Helleborus Grower  
Chelsea Gold Medal Winner  
2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009

## Our 2010 courses & events include

Snowdrop Days 1st & 2nd February

Special Hellebore Open Days (Free) 6th, 7th, 27th & 28th February

Top Performing Plants/Year Round Interest 15th March

Growing Vegetables Parts 1, 2 & 3

19th March, 1st April, 4th June & 26th August

Woodland/Shade Loving Plants Special Open Days (Free)  
9th & 10th April

Easy to Grow Woodland & Shade Plants: RHS Recommended event 13th April

Perennials for Cutting with Paula Pryke: RHS Recommended event

29th & 30th June

Contact 01359 233363 for details of all courses and events.

## NURSERY

Open Tuesday- Saturday

## THE ORCHARD ROOM

Open Thursday, Friday, Saturday

Good coffee, delicious lunches and afternoon teas. Winner Best Informal Dining Venue, Suffolk Food and Drink Awards 2008

SEASONAL FOOD USING OUR OWN AND LOCALLY GROWN PRODUCE

Harveys Garden Plants and The Orchard Room are  
OPEN THROUGHOUT THE YEAR  
9.30am to 4.30pm

# NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to these new members who have joined the Suffolk Group since our last newsletter. We hope they will introduce themselves to committee members when they come to our events.

Mrs Chris Gwinnell, Hitcham, Ipswich.

Mrs Kate Elliott, Forward Green, Stowmarket.

Dr. Sue Hamilton Blyth, Lavenham.

Mr. Peter & Mrs Lorraine Finn, Broom Heath, Woodbridge.

Mr. John & Mrs Patricia Payne, Elmswell, Bury St. Edmunds.

Mrs Betty Barrett, Little Downham, Ely.

Mrs Hilary Drain, Leavenheath, Sudbury.

If other members live nearby do get in touch to see whether you can share a lift to our talks and visits.

## *Late news*

## LYNN CORNFORTH

*OUR NEW TREASURER INTRODUCES  
HERSELF*

I have lived in Suffolk all my life, in the heart of the countryside. My family includes generations of keen gardeners, however I have to date certainly showed a lack of horticultural skill. By accepting the position of treasurer of the Suffolk Group I hope that some expertise may rub off on me.

I am on firmer ground with accounts, having trained as a Chartered Accountant about 20 years ago and I have been working with accounts ever since.



# NEWSLINES FROM PLANT HERITAGE NATIONAL OFFICE

**SPONSORSHIP** The Esmee Fairbairn Foundation has agreed to fund Plant Heritage's Threatened Plant Project to the sum of £72,000 over the next three years. This is PH's first major research project and will provide solid information about the state of play of cultivated plants. Not only will it determine which cultivated plants are actually at risk but it also seeks to involve as many different plant organisations as possible (including HPS, AGS, RHS Lily Group, the Saxifrage Society) who will be part of the assessment process. Whilst Plant Heritage is taking the lead on the project the involvement of the whole horticultural community will be necessary in order to produce the comprehensive action plans that will tackle the problem of those plants identified as most at risk.

**ROBIN COMPTON** our president since 1994 died on 14th November at the age of 87. His original association with Plant Heritage began in 1988 when he became chairman. A keen and expert gardener, he and his wife Janey restored the spectacular but neglected gardens of Newby Hall, his family home in Yorkshire, establishing a National Collection of Cornus along the way. He will be greatly missed by all at Plant Heritage.

**RAFFLE** Despite the financial downturn this year our raffle raised £4,000, so huge thanks to all for your support. All details of all twelve winners can be found on our website/newspage. The first prize of £350 cash (donated by Hatts Quality Travel) goes to Daphne Johnson from Ross on Wye.

**LEGACIES** Did you know that a staggering £1.9bn was left to UK charities through legacies in 2009? However Plant Heritage received no legacies in the last year. Just a reminder that any gift, no matter how small, makes a huge difference to the core work of the charity. After taking into account your family and friends, please consider Plant Heritage when next making or changing your will.

*The extracts are from Newslines, the on-line newsletter published quarterly on the Plant Heritage website*

# SUFFOLK PLANT HERITAGE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**President** Ivan Dickings AHRHS, Rumah Kita, Church Lane, Bedfield, Woodbridge IP13 7JJ, 01728 628401, ivandickings@suffolkonline.net

**Chairman** Margaret Thorpe, Weavers House, Swan Street, Boxford, Sudbury, CO10 5NZ, 01787 211346. smece@aol.com

**Vice Chairman** Sue Burton, Rookery House, Cockfield Road, Felsham IP30 0QP, 01284 828273, rookery.house@virgin.net

**Treasurer** Lynn Cornforth, Antler Ridge, Willisham, Ipswich IP8 4SP, 01473 658814, lynn.cornforth@gotelee.co.uk

**Secretary** Annabel Thorogood, Orchard Cottage, Assington, Sudbury CO10 5L, 01787 212301, annabel.thorogood@gmail.com

**Membership** Pauline Byford, The Dolls House, 13 Eastgate Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1XX, 01284 762628, pabyford@btinternet.com

**Publicity/Newsletter Editor** Widget Finn, Smallwood Farmhouse, Bradfield St George, Bury St Edmunds IP30 0AJ, 01449 736358, widget.finn@btconnect.com

**Propagation** Robert Shepperson, Wayside, Church Street, Worlingworth, Woodbridge IP13 7NJ, 01728 628415, r.shepperson@hotmail.co.uk

**National Collections Co-ordinator** Christine Mole, Well Cottage, California Lane, Hintlesham, Ipswich IP8 3QJ, 01473 652587

## **Other committee members:**

Jim Marshall, Hullwood Barn, Bolton Lane, Shelley, Ipswich IP7 5RE, 01473 822400, jim@malmaisons.plus.com

Anthony Pigott, Kersey's Farm, Mendlesham, Stowmarket IP14 5RB, 01449 766104, anthonymigott@btinternet.com

Anne Tweddle, Brook Farm, Charsfield, Woodbridge IP13 7QA, 01473 737337, anne.tweddle@onetel.net

Idrone Brittain, Willow Farm House, Southolt, Eye IP23 7QJ, 01728 628675, idrone@btinternet.com



[www.nccpgsuffolk.org](http://www.nccpgsuffolk.org)

