



WELWYN GARDEN CITY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

CHAIR

Alison Ewington
79 Ludwick Way
WGC AL7 3PL
01707 376282

SECRETARY

Pat Williams
11 Barleycroft Road
WGC AL8 6JX
01707 324608

TREASURER

David Kell
6 Hall Grove
WGC AL7 4PN
01707 328560

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Steve Williams
11 Barleycroft Road
WGC AL8 6JX
01707 324608

NEWSLETTER No. 148 www.wgchortsoc.org.uk

Summer 2021

Welcome Back

Welcome to our summer newsletter – and we are looking forward to our new season of talks, details below. As Rosie says, at the time of booking it was still uncertain whether we would be able to hold large meetings, but it gave us the opportunity to book speakers that wouldn't normally be able to travel to WGC.

We have a lot of outings to look forward to for 2022. The postponed Norfolk holiday was a great success – and we all thank Denise for coping so well with all the upheaval of arrangements made, then changed, over the past year.

We would like to welcome Beth Mateer to the committee. Beth, a keen gardener, is a member of the *All Aboarders* team working at the railway station. In particular, Beth is going to be looking after our website.
Alison Ewington, Chair

Our Speaker Programme

Almost unbelievably, I still need to be cautious about booking speakers for a live meeting despite the recent easing of Covid-19 restrictions. I have therefore booked the first two speakers for our autumn programme to give their presentations using Zoom and optimistically anticipate a return to live sessions in St Francis Hall from November. All talks start at 8pm.

14 September - Beth Chatto: A Life with Plants - Dr Catherine Horwood Zoom



Catherine is the authorised biographer of the wonderful plants-woman and garden designer Beth Chatto. She won the European Garden Book of the Year 2020 award for this book which was published in 2019 along with a glowing reference from our friend Fergus Garrett.

12 October - Update on Growing Vegetables the No-Dig way - Charles Dowding Zoom

Charles first came to speak to us about his “No-Dig” method of growing vegetables in 2012 and he has since gone on to achieve international recognition and adoption of his methods. He continues to grow vegetables but is increasingly devoting more time to teaching and writing books and articles in newspapers and gardening magazines, so who better to give us an update?



9 November - Shady Characters - Annie Godfrey

Our local star, owner of Daisy Roots and garden designer who is now a Chelsea Flower Show Gold medallist.

Hopefully celebrating a return to live meetings!

14 December - The Danesbury Victorian Fernery - John Roper

John is the chairman of the Friends of Danesbury Fernery, described in 1881 in the R.H.S. Journal as “the best fernery to be found in the Home Counties”. Since September 2015 volunteers have been reclaiming and restoring the site. John will take us through its history with a special emphasis on the planting. He hopes to be accompanied by Sara Donatantonio, their specialist photographer, and Colin Adlam, their fern specialist. **A live meeting but if this is not possible it will postponed to a later date and substituted by a different meeting via Zoom.**

Rosie Brewis

Membership Renewals

Having had a fallow year, subscriptions will become due on 1 September 2021 and remain at £15 per annum. If you would like to continue as a Member, please let Steve Williams have your subscription either by cash or cheque. Alternatively, you can pay by BACS into the Society’s bank, Account No. 10733806, Sort Code 20-92-54. As it takes some time for BACS information to come through, please let him know when you have renewed your membership. **Please let Steve know if you have changed your contact details in the last 18 months.** By email at patstevewilliams@btinternet.com or on 01707 324608. *Steve Williams*

2022 Outings

Subject to Covid-19 restrictions, we hope to run the following programme next year, so **please put the dates in your calendar.**

There are two trips postponed from 2021, plus two new ones. Those Members that have already booked and paid for places on the two postponed outings need only note any slight change of date for next year. The original prices from 2020 will be held.

Anyone who hasn’t booked, but wants to secure a place, **please let Denise Madden know** (gladers2@gmail.com or 07970 415288/01707 323951).

Tuesday 22 February: Winter Lunch – Cambridge Botanic Gardens and Scotsdales, Shelford. Pricing and further details will follow in the Autumn.

After a guided tour of the famous Winter Garden and other delights at Cambridge Botanic Gardens, we will have our annual Winter Lunch in the Winter Garden marquee at Scotsdales Garden Centre, Great Shelford. Menus will be available in November, when you can pre-order your meal. After lunch, there will be a topical talk by one of the Garden Centre Staff and then time to peruse the Garden Centre.



Tuesday 26 April: Pie Corner, Bedmond, Herts - 12.00-17.00. £37.00 (including a light lunch, at the Hollybush, Potters Crouch, with dessert and tea/coffee).

A privately owned garden, designed and created by Bella Stuart-Smith (sister-in-law to Tom), to complement the 1980’s, neo-classical, architect-designed house. Formal near the house, the gardens become more informal towards the woodland. Our visit is timed to see the display of blossom, bulbs and wild garlic. There are a few places still available on this trip.

Tuesday 7 June: Deene Park, Northamptonshire and Elton Hall, Cambridgeshire. Pricing and further details will follow in the Autumn.

Deene Park (right) has belonged to the Brudenell family since 1514. The gardens have fine herbaceous borders, a rose garden and a parterre designed by the late garden-designer David Hicks. These formal gardens give way to a vista of parkland and lakes linked by a canal; which, at its narrowest point is spanned by a fine stone bridge.



Elton Hall (see photo, right) has been home to the Proby family since 1660 but, by the 1980's, the Edwardian gardens had fallen into disrepair. Since then, a continuous programme of restoration and improvement, by Meredyth Proby, has produced the immaculate gardens and topiary that today provide the stunning backdrop to the house.



Tuesday 12 July: Two Oxfordshire Gardens - Pettifers and Broughton Grange. 09.00 - 19.00. £59.00 (including morning and afternoon refreshments and a light lunch at the Saye and Sele Arms, Broughton). A few places are available.

Both of these gardens are privately owned. Pettifers is the creation of influential garden designer, Gina Price. It is a mingling of formal and naturalistic planting, with the surrounding countryside providing a 'borrowed landscape'.

Broughton Grange is owned by ex-chief of the Royal Bank of Scotland, Stephen Hester, and has both traditional planting and extensive contemporary planting: including a walled garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith.

Denise Madden

A Bench in Memory of Peter and Connie Jenkins

A few months ago, the Society was asked by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council if we would like to finance a seat, to be placed in the new Centenary Woodland Garden on The Campus.



At the AGM in March, it was agreed that we would purchase a seat with an appropriately worded plaque in memory of Peter Jenkins, who died earlier this year, and his wife, Connie. Peter and Connie did so much for the Society over many years, in particular organising outings and holidays.

The seat has now been installed and paid for from the Society's funds at a cost of £750. If you would like to make a donation in remembrance of Peter, please send your donation by BACS to the Society's bank, Account No 10733806, Sort Code 20-92-54. Please use your name as a reference. Alternatively, you can send a cheque payable to WGC Horticultural Society to our Treasurer, David Kell, 6 Hall Grove, WGC, AL7 4PN.

Sunday 5 September, 14.00 – 17.00: Rotary Charity Open Gardens

Welwyn Garden City's Rotary Club invite you to our **Charity Open Gardens** in aid of Herts Young Homeless and Rotary charities at 8 Sherrardspark Road, 27 Coneydale, 35 Digswell Road, 12 Mandeville Rise and 25 Reddings. There will be refreshments, a raffle and stalls at 6 Sherrardspark Road.

Entry fee: £2.50 for one garden or £6.00 for all six gardens, payable in cash only please on the day at any garden.

Accompanied children are free. There are no parking restrictions on most roads. Use AL8 7JP for your sat nav. *Steve Williams*



The Gardens of North Norfolk: 21-23 June 2021

This was a holiday like no other; deferred by a year, put back by a week, "Will we go/Won't we go?" Most people would be happy to go to a masked ball, but on a masked holiday? Our pioneer spirit paid off, however. We were our Tour Manager's first job since March 2020 and the George Hotel's first group for two years. We were, consequently rewarded with special treatment and excellent service throughout. We were even given an unscheduled, personal welcome talk at the Mannington Estate by Lady Walpole herself, as we were the first group to visit this year and possibly for much longer.

Below are the impressions, from some of the Members, of the gardens we visited. Some of the gardens were, perhaps, not up to their usual standards but with gardeners furloughed and volunteers stood-down for many months this was not surprising and didn't detract from our enjoyment.

Denise Madden

Sandringham Estate

Sandringham was the first place we visited, en route to our hotel in Norwich. We toured the house and large gardens in groups, and had free time to explore further, including visiting the famous Sandringham parish church. Sandringham House, unlike other royal residences, is the Queen's private house, where she spends about 8 weeks every year around Christmas time with family and private guests. Outside this period, no-one occupies the main house.



The West Gardens are on a 'parkland' scale with splendid trees of all ages planted in sweeping lawns (previously used for 'grow your own' in WWII), a woodland walk, a naturalistic stream walk and a large lake surrounded by 'rocks' made of Hertfordshire Pulhamite. More intimate are the Jellicoe ornamental North Garden and the Walled Garden (funded by racehorse winnings, notably *Estimate*) with mixed beds. These are currently being redeveloped, like the whole estate, under the aegis of Prince Charles. I found the

ornamental gardens disappointing, as everything was late and they are still 'work-in-progress'. Perhaps too much work for too few gardeners with 6 gardeners for 200 acres?

Barbara Davies

Blickling Estate

After an excellent breakfast, we set off on a cold but bright dry day. Our coach parked at the top of the drive where we had a magnificent view down to the house and the immaculate lawns and yew hedges. We entered through a small wooden gate into the walled garden which was in the process of being restored when Covid-19 struck and delayed the project. However, several areas have now been cleared and planted with vegetables as the restoration plan gets underway once more. The formal gardens were looking good to the rear of the house and the volunteer gardeners were back in action, waging war on the weeds that had accumulated during all the lockdowns. Sadly, the double herbaceous borders had not been planted up due to the lack of manpower.



Moving on into the wooded areas there were miles of footpaths to explore with a flock of sheep and young lambs, wild flowers and magnificent mature trees to enjoy. One area I particularly liked was down by the huge lake where there were some very comfortable deck chairs to sink into! Despite a chilly wind there were some lovely views and I watched a large group of barnacle geese all paddling along in convoy and changing direction in line with the wind. A very enjoyable visit which ended with a lovely warming bowl of home made soup in the restaurant.

Ann Meers

Mannington Estate

Such a lovely escape from the real world to be in the abundance of Mother Nature. The variety of the different places we have seen, it was such a wonderful experience.

And, yes, the Gardens of the Mannington Estate stood out for me.

There was a beautiful atmosphere all around. The water, the moat surrounding the estate. Like a warm protective embrace.

Even the bell tents - pure white pyramids in the lush green meadow.

Maybe one day?

Even the newest garden, the four elements, I loved.

Imagine a ceremony there for the Earth Fire Water and Air.



And then we found the old church from Anglo Saxon times.

A true jewel. O my God. The old and the new woven in to each other.

Tanja Dragt

Hoveton Hall

For me this was the best garden thus far on the trip. The whole garden gives a sense of tranquility and a desire for a repeat visit.

Owned by the Buxton family since 1946 and opened to the public in 1995 - to share its beauty and to help contribute to the cost of its upkeep, the commitment to the care of the land is very apparent. The Spider Garden is truly amazing - colourful with unusual planting and with the benefit of clear labelling. It has been well maintained throughout lockdown by the two full-time and three part-time gardeners.

It is a meander through from the knot garden, planted in 1998, to the Old Kitchen Garden - and then onto the Woodland Walk. This area is quite compact with one area leading into another quite seamlessly: from the kidney lake (surrounded by vibrant greenery) across bridges and dykes to the Water Garden. What is also very impressive is the Glass House - only four constructed with iron that still survive in England. The restoration was assisted with generous grants by English Heritage and the Country Houses Foundation.

Marion Cleveland

The Worshipful Company of Gardeners

A group from The Worshipful Company of Gardeners paid a visit to the town on 26th July. One of the Livery companies in the City of London, it is a survivor from the medieval craft guilds, dating back to 1345. The present-day company supports charitable activities connected to horticulture. In the morning the group was taken on a tour of the town centre including the Centenary Woodland Garden and the statue of Ebenezer Howard.

Following lunch, the City of Trees group (from our Society) gave an illustrated talk on the project. The group were then escorted on two walks to see some of the arboreal highlights of the town

– Steve and David around Handside and Rosie heading off to Sherrardspark Wood.

The Worshipful Company of
GARDENERS



Alison Ewington

All Aboarders at WGC Station

All Aboarders have faced challenging times this year working in all weathers and ever changing restrictions to achieve remarkable floral displays at the station.

We welcome the help and support of GTR and the Station Manager, Karen, including fitting out our garden shed, repainting a raised bed bench in Pride colours, new All Aboarders signs, and new sleeper style edging around the flat beds on Platforms 3/4. It is so encouraging to be thanked by passengers as often happens.

We have deliberately designed planting to be different in all 12 of our troughs, for variety and different light levels. Society members might like to look at troughs to take inspiration for our own gardens. Some are more successful than others but experimentation is what gardening is all about!



If you are at the station in the coming weeks you will be able to see the displays of dahlias rescued from WHBC 2020 flower beds. Do also pop in to see our display of Heritage photographs in the waiting room on Platform 3/4.

New volunteers and donations are always welcome. Please get in touch via our website www.allboarders.org if you are interested or ring me on 01707 324723. *Lynda Cowan*

If you have any news, seen interesting plants in our public spaces or have plants in your garden that you would recommend to others please let the Editor know: Anne Freimanis, 01707 323277, a.freimanis@icloud.com