



WELWYN GARDEN CITY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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Autumn 2021

At the end of the year...

Thanks to everyone who replied to our survey about returning to meetings in the hall – we had many valuable comments which helped us to come to the decision that, on balance, it



was better to continue with online meetings for a bit longer. We realise that this was a relief to some but a disappointment to others. The committee will keep the conditions under review with the aim of resuming full meetings as soon as is sensible in the new year.

Although online meetings do allow us to have speakers from further afield, we are missing the social contact that physical gatherings offer.

Looking forward to the new year, we have a full programme of outings planned and once we are out-and-about in inspiring gardens again, we will feel that

the world is on a more even keel. Best wishes to everyone for Christmas and New Year from the committee.

Alison Ewington, Chair

Our December Lecture

Our December lecture is a Zoom meeting in our usual Tuesday slot. You can join the meeting and catch up with other members from 7.45pm onwards. The talk will start at 8pm followed by a question and answer session. We will send you an email with your Zoom meeting link a few days before the lecture.

14 December 2021 - How to be a Climate Change Savvy Gardener – Kim Stoddart

Kim's talk will focus on tips for overwintering and creating a more robust garden to face the effects of climate change but with an upbeat focus - we cannot get much more topical than that! Please contact Rosie on rosied@doctors.org.uk or 01707 322066 if you have an area you would like her to cover or any specific problems/questions.



Kim is the author of *The Climate Change Garden* as well as writing for *The Guardian* and *Grow Your Own* and editing *The Organic Way for Garden Organic*. She runs climate change and polytunnel growing courses and therapeutic gardening projects for youngsters with learning disabilities. She is an active, enthusiastic advocate for wildlife friendly, organic gardening and advises on ways of preparing for, and mitigating, the impact of severe weather that climate change has already started to cause.

Our Provisional 2022 Speaker Programme

We are working hard to book speakers for next year, although it still isn't clear when we'll be able to meet again face to face. As soon as we have a full programme we'll let you know. Meanwhile, please keep the second Tuesday evening of the month in your diary.

We are hoping to hear from Chris Thorne in February. His title is "News from the garden shelves or wherever members wish to lead me up the garden path!" Chris has worked at Ayletts for about 20 years and is one of Radio Cambridgeshire's gardening experts. He will discuss the good things to buy and the items which are better left on the shelves! He is happy to answer questions. Please let Rosie know if you have questions of Chris before the date or of course you can always ask them live at the meeting.

John Roper and his colleagues were coming to speak to us about the Danesbury Fernery this year, but will now be with us in May, just in time to tempt you into a late spring visit when the Fernery is bursting into life.

Rosie Brewis

Our 2022 Outings

The outings carried over from 2020 - **Pie Corner** on April 26 and **Two Oxfordshire Gardens** on July 12-- are now sold out but waiting list places are available.

Over half of the places on the two new outings for 2022 are now sold, so if you are thinking of booking, don't leave it too long! Brief details are below; full details appeared in the Summer Newsletter.

Tuesday 22 February: Winter Lunch - Cambridge Botanic Gardens and Scotsdales, Shelford. 09.15 - 17.30. £65 (including coach travel, garden entry and guided tour, morning tea/coffee and biscuits, pre-lunch drinks, three course lunch with tea/coffee and after-lunch talk).



In the morning, we will have a guided tour of the Winter highlights of Cambridge Botanic Garden, including the delights of the Winter Garden - one of the best-established in the country. We will then have our annual Winter Lunch in the Marquee at the Sunflower Café at

Scotsdales Garden Centre, Great Shelford. This will be followed by a talk from Scotsdales' Kevin Marsh entitled 'The Joys of Spring'.

Tuesday 7 June: Deene Park, Northants and Elton Hall, Cambs - 09.00-18.00/18.30. £61 (including coach travel, morning tea/coffee/cake, two garden entries & guided tours and a light lunch).

At Deene Park, we will have two, back-to-back guided tours of the gardens, with the Head Gardener. This will keep the groups small enough for everyone to hear. There are fine herbaceous borders, a rose garden and a parterre designed by the late garden-designer David Hicks. Beyond these formal gardens there is a vista of parkland and lakes.



After a light lunch, we will travel on to Elton Court, which has immaculate gardens and topiary which provide a stunning backdrop to the house. We will have a self-guided tour of the gardens with an additional tour of the Private Garden (not generally open to the public) led by one of the gardeners.

Contact Denise Madden, to make any bookings or to ask any questions,
gladers2@gmail.com, 01707 323951/07970 415288.

Denise Madden

Have a Look at Our new Website

Our new website is now live at wgchortsoc.co.uk or via a google search. Here you can find details on upcoming meetings, news, joining details and ways to contact the committee.

We will also soon be uploading information for our outings and holidays. The website will be added to frequently so please do visit for updates, and share with your family and friends. There is also now a general enquiries email account to reach the committee - info.wgchortsoc@gmail.com



Beth Mateer

Membership Renewals

Having had a fallow year, subscriptions were 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

Our June Holiday Remembered - East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden

So much to see and discover! Well maintained but not manicured.

Lots of different garden spaces or rooms to explore; some small, some large. So many strange, exotic and unusual shrubs and trees.

Nice, varied water features too. Something surprising around each corner. It had a maze-like quality about it. Not knowing where you were, or what may be discovered. The whole garden was surrounded (framed) by long, plain grass and hedge borders. Would imagine families with young children would enjoy the garden in particular.

Good choice of saleable plants and very good in and outdoor tea and eating facilities, with plenty of seating. And, of course, ample parking close by. Very worthwhile.



Danny and Barbara Charles

(I do apologize for not including the Charles' write up of our visit in the summer newsletter – Anne)

Peter and Connie Jenkins - Bench in The Campus Centenary Woodland Garden

On behalf of the committee, and the Jenkins family, we would like to thank everyone who donated most generously towards the cost of the bench. It makes a fine addition to the garden. It is hoped that there will be a small gathering at the site of the bench, with refreshments at Campus West, following the interment of Peter's ashes on the afternoon of Monday 14th March. All will be welcome.

Howardsgate Borders – A Progress Report

Some of you might just remember an announcement made by Alison at a meeting of the Society in autumn 2019 concerning a Council project to revive the rather underwhelming (at the time) twin flower borders which run down the centre of Howardsgate. Ann McDonald, the Ecology and Landscape Officer of the Council, invited the Society's members to become involved in this project. On my way home from the meeting I thought more about this, became intrigued and resolved to find out more. Two years later, Ann and I have become friends as well as an enthusiastic volunteer team fully responsible for the renovation and hands-on maintenance of around 150 metres of flower borders in the heart of Welwyn Garden City!

The task facing us in autumn 2019 seemed formidable, notwithstanding the willing work of the Council's contract gardeners. Although the borders had already been cut back for winter, it was clear that in too many places self-seeding plant 'thugs' had taken over, notable among these being rampant Echinops and Geranium, not to mention overplanting of Iris and Asters. Total clearance and starting from scratch were not an option. So, having removed mountains of unwanted plants with the help of the gardeners, we set about choosing and purchasing replacement plants. We agreed to move to a more contemporary



naturalistic style of planting, also called prairie planting. As you will know this type of planting relies mainly on robust perennial plants and grasses, which require less regular maintenance. It is also great for insect and bird life. The plants were ordered and delivered. In total there were around 600 perennials including Eupatorium, Filipendula, Lythrum, Perovskia, Rudbeckia, Echinacea, Salvia, Stipa, Calamagrostis, Molinia and many more. I

had never dealt with such large numbers of plants before! Planting began in late autumn 2019 and was finished in early winter.

In March 2020 the pandemic struck! For many weeks during the first lockdown no work on the green spaces anywhere in town was permitted. In Howardsgate, not surprisingly the new young plants were rapidly overwhelmed by emerging weeds, and they, as well as we of course, struggled. When later in spring, outside work once again resumed, the remainder of the year became a continuous battle against weeds, as well as existing 'noisy neighbour' plants smothering the new ones. With all their other responsibilities around the town, the gardeners understandably had only limited time available to spend maintaining our borders. Rather frustratingly, for health and safety reasons, I was personally not really allowed to do any hands-on work (but did some anyway!). Despite all our efforts, the hoped for improvement in the borders during summer 2020 was frankly hard to find, and

this was disappointing for all of us involved in the project. Despite the setback, we resolutely pressed on! In autumn more unwanted plants were removed and replaced with over 300 new ones. Slowly but surely, we began to get some control over the weeds. February this year came with what at first seemed to me somewhat disappointing news, but was actually very exciting. Ann told me she was retiring from her post at the Council, but crucially, she would like to stay on to work with me voluntarily to form a two-person team with full hands-on responsibility for the borders. And - we could enlist help from the full-time gardeners on large tasks as and when we needed it. Marvellous - and what fun we have had since! Throughout the spring and summer Ann and I have been meeting one morning a week to work for a couple of hours on each of the six borders in turn. Suitably, we follow each session by having coffee and a chat seated on one of the nearby benches. We have both really enjoyed it. How lucky we are in Welwyn Garden City to have such agreeable surroundings for morning coffee!



As happy and enthusiastic workers we are pleased with the progress the borders have made this year. The pictures give you a feel of how they looked this summer. There is much still to be done, but we feel we are beginning to get to where we hope to be. This autumn we have been making further visits to Rochfords to buy more exciting plants. These will hopefully make the borders even more attractive next summer. I can't wait! Please do pop along to Howardsgate from time to time (it's free!) and take a closer look at our efforts. Then let me know what you think at adrian.debaat@ntlworld.com, good or not so good, hopefully the former!

Adrian de Baat

Something To Look Forward To

National Garden Scheme opening: 35 Digswell Road: Sunday, 31st July, 14.00 – 17.30pm. Adrian de Baat will be opening his fantastic and highly acclaimed garden only once next year, so put the date in your diary.

All Aboarders – autumn at the station

Although the nights are drawing in there is still much to see at the station. The dahlias, recycled from the WHBC 2020 flower beds in Howardsgate and Parkway, have been giving us an excellent display. If you are taking a train to London do take a short detour to Platform 1 to see some of our newly planted troughs. Most of the other troughs have also been replanted. We are delighted with the new sleeper style edging around the beds on Platforms 3/4. Thanks to GTR for this provision from the Passenger Benefit Fund. However this has left us with the problem. We need a large quantity of compost/ top soil to raise the levels. Then we plan to redesign the beds. If you can help with compost or top soil we would be delighted to hear from you.





On Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th December, All Aboarders will be taking part in the St Francis Christmas Tree Festival. Our entry is entitled "On Track for Christmas". Our Christmas Tree is currently thriving in one of our beds on Platform 3. It will be used for the festival and then be on display in the

station waiting room. Please come along to support this popular event and vote for All Aboarders!

New volunteers and donations are always welcome. Please get in touch via our website www.allaboarders.org or ring me on 01707 324723.

Lynda Cowan

For Sale – Trug on Legs with Cover

One of our members would like to sell the pictured trug and zipped cover. It is 77cms wide



and 186 cms long, with legs 81cms tall. With the frame and cover in place it stands at 139cms. It has been used but cost £190 when new. Our member is asking for best offers. It would need to be collected from central Welwyn Garden City. If you are interested, please ring Denise Madden



on 01707 323951 who will liaise with the owner for you.

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