

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2002 Christmas Social

Our next meeting on Monday 9th December will be the occasion of our Christmas Supper. The meeting starts an hour earlier than normal, at 7.00 p.m with the meal due to start at 7.30p.m. Mr Bob Ogle, well known for his interesting talks, will furnish our after dinner entertainment.

Once again local caterers will provide the meal. Tickets, priced at £15 each, are available from Tony Thomas and should be purchased before the end of November. Please let him know if you prefer the vegetarian alternative to the main dish and which of the desserts you require. Also please let him know who you would like to sit with. Friends and family are welcome to join us. Anyone who needs transport for the occasion should contact a member of the committee.

Recent Events

10th August Visit to Capel Manor Our thanks to Elizabeth Thomas for organising such an excellent visit. Even the rain held off.



12th August Mr D March Secrets of a Walled Garden

Mr March was at last able to give his talk, having also listened to Mr Scott's talk about Mexican plants in May. He described to us the many advantages of having a walled garden where the climate may be a few degrees warmer

9th September Mrs S Hartfree Creating Beautiful Borders

Mrs Hartfree, who came armed with a large number of plants, gave us tips on creating borders. Her own lawn gets smaller every year as she had to make room for yet more plants.

14th October Mr H Newman ABC of Pruning

Hilary Newman from Hadlow College made a welcome return to share his pruning expertise with us. He brought along examples of common plants and explained how and when they should be pruned. Now there will be no excuses for badly pruned roses/clematis!

Autumn Show

The village hall was transformed with a display of 182 entries in 45 classes. The plant stall sported its fresh produce, the refreshments were greatly appreciated and the raffle spiced up the end of the proceedings.

The Prizes were presented by our President, Mr Bill Roberts

Mr Douglas Nicholson	The Vegetable Society Certificate and Medal (best vegetable)
Mrs Elizabeth Thomas	Hill Cup (best exhibit in the floral art section)
Mrs Barbara Macknish	The Stevens Cup (best exhibit in flowers section)
Mrs Barbara Macknish	Townsend Vase (most firsts in domestic classes)
Mr Douglas Nicholson	Championship Cup (most firsts in all classes ex. domestic)
Mr Douglas Nicholson	Garden News Shield (most points for vegetables)
Mrs Claire Williams	Coronation Cup (most points in domestic class)
Mrs Brenda Mansfield	Everard Bowl (most successful new exhibitor)
Garden News Top Tray awards	Gold - Mr Douglas Nicholson, Silver - Mr Tony Thomas

Judge's Comments on the Domestic Section

Class 41 **Lemon Curd:** Difficult to choose between these entries. Judge looked for a good set, smooth consistency, well filled jar and well presented appearance of label.

Class 42 **Bread Rolls:** Winner had good and crisp crust, even texture and no holes.

- Class 43 **Bakewell Tart:** Judge looked for evenly browned bottom to tart. The pastry should hold together when cut and fill was correctly distributed throughout. The winning entry did have a light patch on base which was probably caused by a bubble of air remaining while being baked, but overall it was the best of those exhibited.
- Class 44 **Lemon Cake:** Flavour was good on all entries, but the judge also looked for an evenly risen and not overcooked cake.
- Class 45 **Stuffed Tomatoes:** Most entries looked very attractive but the tomatoes filled with cream cheese were felt to be overwhelmed with the filling. The ones with rice were a little too bland, so after much deliberation she chose the winner on appearance and taste.

Forthcoming Events

9 December Christmas Supper followed by a talk by Bob Ogley
13 January 2003 Annual General Meeting

CHRISTMAS MENU

9th December 2002
7.00 for 7.30 pm

Starter

Parsnip and Apple Soup

Main Course

Roast Turkey with Trimmings and Vegetables
or
Duo of Tarts – Roasted Red Pepper & Watercress

Dessert

A choice of

Tropical Fruit Jellies with Passion Fruit Coulis
or
Homemade Ginger Ice Cream in Brandy Snap Basket with Fruit Compote
or
Christmas Mincemeat and Cranberry Tart with Crème Anglaise
Or
Cheese Board

Tea/Coffee & Mints

Tickets £15.00 per head

Historical Snippet

Lavender

Botanical Name: *Lavendula*. Family : Labiatae

Washing is fairly new in the West. But the name of lavender is not new; it comes from the Latin *lavare* (to wash). Lavender was used from ancient times to make perfumes to scent such soaps as there were.

The Romans washed and took frequent baths in public bathhouses, but after the fall of the Roman Empire, the bathwater was tossed away with the rest of that civilizations. Even royalty seldom washed; they used perfume liberally instead. Elizabeth I took a bath occasionally, but James I never even washed his hands, which he "rubb'd" with the wet edge of a napkin. Water in sixteenth-century England was often contaminated with sewage and washing in it would not have been very healthy anyway. One of the lures of colonists to the New World was that the water was so pure it could even be drunk and "those that drinks it be as healthful, fresh and lustie, as they what drink beere" (Captain John Smith). Even so, somehow out of all this filth and pollution flowered some of the most beautiful literature that has ever been.

Soap, when available, was very expensive. In 1562, four pounds of grey soap cost twice as much as a whole pig (which was sixpence) and six times as much as a dozen eggs, but almost anyone could grow lavender, and it was so common that in 1568 the botanist William Turner said it "were but lost labor" to describe it. It was one of the cheaper perfumes, which were an important part of hygiene. Lady Macbeth, when agonizing over that bad "little hand" of hers, does not talk of soap and water, but of "all the perfumes in Arabia". But of course she could have afforded something better than lavender water.

Real perfumes were, as they are now, pretty expensive. Workmen handling frankincense in Alexandria were "sowed up and sealed" into their breeches so they could not conceal it in body crevices. Lavender water was easy to make, but pure oil of lavender was a luxury. It takes two thousand pounds of blossoms to make ten pounds of distilled lavender essence.

By the nineteenth century, soap and water had come into fashion and the use of perfumes was suspect. Henry Phillips, writing in the 1820s, called the use of perfumes in men an "effeminate practice" brought to Rome from Greece and said "we would recommend the old practice of laying clean linen in lavender, in preference to throwing the extract of it on dirty clothes."

Although introduced to Britain early, lavender is probably native to the Mediterranean (some say it may originally have come from India). It likes chalky dry soil and bright sunshine, and although it can die back and grow up again from the roots in spring, it doesn't stand extreme cold.

It is good to grow lavender. The old writers said that it would "comforte the brayne very well" and that you can "imbibe good humour" from it. The herbalist John Gerard warned against its overuse by "unlearned Physitians and . . . foolish women", but said that it would "helpe the panting and passion of the heart". Whether this is true or not, a bed of lavender, or a handful of it in a drawer, is a comfort to the nose, the brain, and the heart. It's nearly as good as a hot shower.

(Adapted from *100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names* by Diana Wells)

Poetry Corner

OUR England is a garden that is full of stately views,
Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues,
With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.

For where the old thick laurels grow, along the thin red wall,
You'll find the tool- and potting-sheds which are the heart of all,
The cold-frames and the hot-houses, the dungpits and the tanks,
The rollers, carts and drain-pipes, with the barrows and the planks.

And there you'll see the gardeners, the men and 'Prentice boys
Told off to do as they are bid and do it without noise;
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words.

And some can pot begonias and some can bud a rose,
And some are hardly fit to trust with anything that grows;
But they can roll and trim the lawns and sift the sand and loam,
For the Glory of the Garden occupieth all who come.

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing:—"Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinnerknives.

There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that's crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it's only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden that it may not pass away!

(*The Glory of the Garden* by Rudyard Kipling)