

MEOPHAM GARDEN ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Photo : Jo Latimer

Winter 2007

Spring Show 24th March 2007

Calling all members to enter. If you have never exhibited before, just have a go. Yours may be the best exhibit on the day. Make sure you follow precisely the schedule in the 2007 Programme. All entry details should be given to our Show Secretary Barbara Macknish between 6 and 9pm on the Thursday prior to the show. The fee is 10p for each entry. Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 9 and 9:30pm and between 10am and 12:45pm on the day of the show. The doors open at 3pm and admission to the show is free. Take the opportunity to buy plants, raffle tickets, tea and a slice of cake before the prize giving at 4:15pm.

LATE ENTRIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

If you enter something in the show, please help clear up afterwards and be sure to take your own entries home. Buckets and black sacks will be provided to help with the operation. Please do not expect others to clear up for you.

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

February 12th Wildlife of the North Downs Robert Canis

February 18th Snowdrops & Hellebores at Meadow View, Hodsall Street

Once again Barbara Macknish will be opening her garden to the public between 11am – 3:30pm to view her magnificent display in aid of the Eleanor Foundation. There will be a plant stall and teas will also be available.

March 12th Gardening in Dry Conditions Hillary Newman

April 16th Aspects of Fuchsias Ron Holmes

May 14th Gales, Greenhouses & Global Warming Ian Currie

June 7th Summer Garden Visit
Bardown Oast Farm & Orchard Cottage, Stonegate, East Sussex

Bardown Oast Farm comprises a twin oast house built in 1864 and converted to a family home in the 1970's and Orchard Cottage, plus 85 acres of land in an area of outstanding natural beauty. The estate, which is divided by the river Limden, includes pasture for livestock as well as extensive gardens and many mature trees and shrubs.

In the fields around Orchard Cottage we will see free range chickens, goats, Berkshire pigs, and a pedigree Sussex beef herd. The cottage garden has mixed borders, a rockery, fish pond, and a small orchard, with extensive view across the East Sussex countryside.

Garden rooms surround the Oast; a pool garden, a Rhododendron walk, ornamental duck enclosure, and a walled fruit and vegetable garden. Espalier and fan-trained fruit cover the walls, a large fruit cage protects currants, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries. Beyond the vegetable beds is a 65ft Victorian greenhouse in working order with potting shed and apple store where two established grape vines, wall-trained tender fruit and ornamental plants are housed.

We will visit the gardens in the afternoon. Weather permitting we will enjoy a cream tea on the lawn. The cost of this coach trip will be £10-£15 (depending on numbers) and the entrance fee to the garden, which includes the refreshments, will be donated to the Hospice in the Weald charity.

Recent Events

November 13th First 10 Years at Owletts and Onion Growing Chris Spree

Club member and Cobham chairman, Chris gave us an illustrated talk detailing the history of Owletts and how they have renovated the garden during their first 10 years there. He also told us how he grows his enormous prize winning onions.

December 11th Christmas Supper

The 64 members and friends who attended were treated to another excellent meal by Vicki Hooper and her team. The desserts were particularly delicious. After dinner Lt.Col. (Retired) Mike Martin spoke about his experiences as a tour operator on visits to war graves all over the world. His talk was extremely informative with loads of funny and sometime very moving anecdotes. The whole evening went very smoothly and the committee hope that all present enjoyed themselves.

January 10th AGM

Prior to the serious business of the evening, Barbara Macknish gave an illustrated talk about creating a vegetable garden from scratch. After a short refreshment break the AGM was held. The Chairman's report follows:

Although we were only able to increase our membership marginally, taken all round, the club had a very successful year. The programme put together by Ann Smith and Elizabeth Thomas covered a wide range of topics all of interest either directly or indirectly to gardeners.

We started the year with a very interesting talk by Anne Nicholson on her travels in Vietnam, which was followed by a wine and cheese buffet and finally the AGM.

February took us back to the wartime 'Dig for Victory' Campaign and in March we were told about weather forecasting and how to work out early in the day whether a frost would be devastating our young plants during the following 24 hours.

The high spot in the year's calendar was a Gardeners Question Time Session by Helen Yemm in April followed in May with a talk on Garden Design.

Our committee ladies came to the fore again in June when they produced the most enjoyable refreshments to round off a mini members show comprising 3 classes; exhibiting a fragrant rose, a plant grown in an unusual container and a vase of garden flowers. This was followed by a quiz prepared and presented by our Vice Chairman David Mansfield.

In July we enjoyed a warm summer evening at Yalding Organic Gardens and a generous Ploughman's Supper in their restaurant.

A Plant Clinic with a talk on House Plants in August was an unusual departure for us and in September we learned how to protect and encourage Wildlife in our gardens.

The President of the British Iris Society spoke on Irises in October and showed some very exotic slides and then in November one of our members Chris Spree let us into the secrets of growing large onions at which he has become expert and followed this with the interesting features of Owllets.

Our Christmas Dinner was one of the best we have had, Vicky Hooper prepared an excellent meal and the speaker Lt Col Mike Martin gave an amusing talk on his experiences as a Tour Guide.

Both of our shows the Spring Show and the Autumn Show were well supported with high quality exhibits, and credit for efficient organisation of both events must go to our show secretary Barbara Macknish and her assistant Clare Williams, who most successfully operated our computerized exhibit recording system.

Once again we had a stall, organised by Jennifer Ward, at the Nurstead Fete and it was a most successful and pleasant day for those who helped and financially beneficial for the club and Nurstead Church.

Our outing this year took us for a couple of hours to that quaint old town of Rye where we had lunch followed by a fascinating visit to the famous garden of the late Christopher Lloyd. Unfortunately it was one of the few wet days during the year but nevertheless it was very enjoyable and our thanks for organising the trip go to Vera Bingham.

I cannot let this report go without mentioning the following persons, Mike Hughes who has kept us well informed with the quarterly Newsletters, Ron Borrow who kindly designed and printed the tickets for the various events, Vera Bingham who ran our raffles, Jo Latimer and Maureen Parnell for running the plant stall which benefits both the club and members, Val Fairweather for making sure we have refreshments at our meetings and shows and lastly Ann Kneif for bringing us into the 21st century by organizing power point presentations for two of our speakers.

As this is the last report I shall be making as chairman I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have given me their loyal support over the past six years. Firstly the President and Vice Chairman, next the three very hard working and efficient secretaries Vivien Sims, Elizabeth Thomas and Hazel Borrow who have made my job very much easier; also the two treasurers, Tony Thomas and Hazel Borrow, who both kept the books accurately and the club free from financial problems. Last but by no means least I am indebted to the committee who have been most supportive and have worked hard to ensure the success of all the various activities and projects the club have undertaken.

As outgoing chairman I can promise whoever takes on the chair can be assured of the utmost support from all the officers and committee who are very capable and able to keep the club going forward into the future with confidence.

My thanks go to all our members for their support at meetings, shows and functions over the past six years and my best wishes to the club for the years ahead.

Douglas Nicholson.
Chairman.

News From Cobham Gardeners

14 th February	Tom Hart Dyke will talk about his winter travels	
14 th March	Growing & Preparing Vegetable for Showing Chris Spree & Alan Holland	
14 th April	Spring Show	Starts 3.15pm at Meadow Rooms
28 th April	Plant Sale	Owletts from 10am
9 th May	TBA	

The meetings start at 8pm in the Meadow Rooms in Cobham.

Historical Snippet

LOOSESTRIFE

Common Name: Yellow loosestrife, purple loosestrife.

Botanical Names: *Lysimachia*, *Lythrum*.

Families: Primulaceae, Lythraceae

The original name of yellow loosestrife, or *Lysimachia vulgaris*, comes from King Lysimachus who was the companion and successor of Alexander the Great.

Lysimachus's name came from the Greek *lysi machein*, ("causing strife to cease"), and loosestrife was used to prevent yoked animals from fighting (a sprig was put between them) and to staunch the wounds of war.

Purple loosestrife, called "lythrum", from the Greek *lythron*, "blood" (referring to the flower's colour), grows in streams and boggy places. It was once thought to be the "long purples" near which Ophelia drowned, but scholars decided that those were really orchids. However, the famous pre-Raphaelite painting by John Millais of the drowned Ophelia shows her lying in a stream with loosestrife on its banks. Evidently Millais and his friend, Holman Hunt, looked a long time for an appropriate place for the tragedy and found it on the Ewell River in Surrey. Millais painted the streambed with its banks of loosestrife leaving a gap for Ophelia, who was later inserted. The long-suffering model, Elizabeth Siddal, was painted lying in a cold bath in Gower Street. Siddal, like Ophelia, seems to have been unlucky in love. In 1860 she married Dante Gabriel Rossetti, another pre-Raphaelite artist for whom she modelled, but in 1862 she took an overdose of laudanum and died. Rossetti apparently felt he had neglected her and remorsefully buried his only complete book of poems with her. Seven years later, however, he had her body exhumed so he could publish the poems. As for Millais, he married John Ruskin's wife.

Purple loosestrife is important botanically because it is trimorphic. These kinds of plants bear flowers with three different lengths of stamens and pistils, so a bee can only cross-fertilize by matching together different configurations of each flower, and has to go to another plant to do so. Thus self-fertilization is impossible. This sophisticated system is one of the wonders of the botanical world and made Charles Darwin, who studied it, write to Asa Gray, "I am almost stark, staring mad over *Lythrum*".

Purple loosestrife blooms at the end of summer during the angry heat of August, but when the hope of coolness is near, they make sheets of brilliant colour across steamy lowlands. It spreads in streambeds and marshes, both in Britain and the United States, and is regarded as a pestilential weed, although Mrs William Starr Dana, in *How to Know the Wild Flowers*, says, "One who has seen the inland marsh in August aglow with this beautiful plant, is almost ready to forgive the Old Country some of the many pests she has shipped to our shores in view of this radiant acquisition".

Poetry Corner

Weeder's Thoughts

I have raked the soil and planted the seeds
Now I've joined the army that fights the weeds.
For me no flashing saber and sword,
To battle the swiftly marching horde;
With a valiant heart I fight the foe,
My only weapon a trusty hoe.
No martial music to swing me along,
I march to the robin redbreast song.
No stirring anthem of bugle and drum
But the cricket's chirp and the honey bee's hum.
No anti-aircraft or siren yell
But there's Trumpet-creeper and Lily-bell.
With a loving heart and a sturdy hand,
I defend the borders of flower-land;
While high over Larkspur and Leopardbane,
A butterfly pilots his tiny plane;
But I shall not fear his skillful hand,
My enemy charges only by land.
Would those who lead nations in war and hate
But lay down their guns at some garden gate,
There, bury- their bombs and their bloody deeds,
And join the grand army that's fighting the weeds.
-ALMA B. Eymann



Photo: Mike Hughes