



Photo: Jo Latimer

Autumn 2011

Christmas Social Monday 12th December 2011 at 6:45 for 7:15pm

Tickets priced at £17.00 each will be on sale for our Christmas supper until the end of November. Please make your choice of main course and dessert from the menu on the next page. Again this year we ask that you bring you own 'wine' and glasses. Water will be provided. Our entertainment this year will be provided by members of Larkfield Active Retirement Association.

Please note the slightly earlier start than in previous years.



Meopham Garden Association

Christmas Menu

Starter

Asparagus Soup (V)

Main Course

Roast Beef & Turkey with sausage wrapped in bacon
& a herb Yorkshire pudding
& seasonal vegetables,
roast & new potatoes

or

Nut Roast (V)
& seasonal vegetable
roast & new potatoes

Dessert

Christmas Pudding with Brandy Sauce

or

Peach Melba Torte & Cream

or

Cheese & Biscuits

Tea or Coffee & Mini Mince Pies

Forthcoming Association Meetings & Other Events

12 th December 2011	Christmas Supper
9 th January 2012	AGM
13 th February 2012	Members Forum & Seed Swap (see below for more information)
12 th March 2012	Winterdales Cheesemakers

Recent Events

8th August What the Judge is Looking For

With our Autumn Show rapidly approaching, Robert Wiseman provided guidelines on how to display exhibits to best advantage and the best sizes for various kinds of exhibits. He also set up a small show for us to 'judge' and then discussed our results with us.

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Meopham Garden Association

12th September

Perennial Plants for Continuous Colour

Mrs Tallboys showed us how her own garden was developed to provide year round colour with minimal maintenance as both she and her late husband were physically unable to work hard in the garden.

17th September

Autumn Show

Visitors to the village hall were greeted by the colour and diversity of autumn on September 17, 2011. The event was well supported with 223 entries received from 21 competitors, plus four juniors. We also had one new exhibitor. All but two classes had entries. We were pleased to have judges remark on the quality of the show.

Congratulations to the award winners.

The Townsend Vase was won by Enid Lander. She also won the Coronation Cup and the Harvel Floral Bowl.

The Championship Cup was won by Barbara Macknish.

The Garden News Shield was won by Maurice Redsell.

The Stevens Cup was awarded to Janet Oxford.

The National Vegetable Society Medal was awarded to Tony Thomas who also won the Douglas Nicholson Trophy.

The Goodwin Cup was won by Viv Sims.

Gail King won the Hill Cup.

The Top Tray Award was won by Jo Latimer who also won our new trophy, the Bill Roberts Cup.

The Everard Bowl was not awarded as neither of our 2 new exhibitors from the Spring or Autumn Show received a place in either show. We are considering rephrasing the Everard Bowl to be a "novice" class as opposed to the current wording on eligibility. This would be to encourage those new to showing to continue beyond the first year and to still be eligible for the award. The details are to be determined.

Thanks also are due to those few members who helped with setting up and clearing away, and particularly to Janet Oxford and Celia Thompson. Thanks to Joan Colyer, Jo Armstrong and Barbara Macknish for acting as stewards and Roy Lingham who shadowed them. Thanks to those who donated cakes and helped to run the tea room, those who worked on the plant stall and to Vera for the raffle. Thank you to all the exhibitors who made the effort to enter this year's show and to those who also supported the club by attending.

Sharon Sperling (Show Secretary)

The show dates for next year are 24th March and 8th September. The specified bulbs for Classes 1 and 2 of the Spring Show 2012 are **Pink Pearl** (Hyacinth) and **Easter Bonnet** (Narcissus).

10th October

Hardy Geraniums

Jacqueline A'Violet told us how she came to specialize in Hardy Geraniums and some of the history behind this most versatile plant. She also told us how to propagate and cultivate them.

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Seed Swap at the Member's Forum 13th February 2012

We are proposing to have a seed swap as part of the February meeting. Members are asked to bring along to the AGM any saved seed or bought seeds that are not required. Any types of seeds are welcome; flowers, vegetables, shrubs etc. The current plan is that tokens will be issued for every packet or envelope of seeds brought along which can then be exchanged for something different. It is possible that tokens might be sold to anybody not offering their own seed so they will be able to purchase packets as an alternative to swapping. The details of this are still to be finalized. We may also include (washed) pots for swapping. Please let any Committee member know your thoughts on this as soon as possible.

Saved seed will only be accepted if the following instructions have been followed:

- 1 Provide 'sensible' quantities of seed in paper packets/envelopes. If supplying old seed, increase the quantity to offset any reduced viability.
- 2 Packets must be clearly marked with name (common/botanical) and month/year collected.
- 3 Include as much cultural information as possible (perhaps on separate sheet). This should include approximate height and spread, preferred soil type and conditions (if significant), and whether Perennial, Biennial, Hardy, Annual, or Half-hardy annual.
- 4 Seed saved from F1 hybrids will not come true to 'type', but could be offered if clearly marked, for anybody not unduly bothered
- 5 For vegetable seeds, state whether organic although this is difficult to prove especially if other similar plants in vicinity may have cross pollinated
- 6 Excess purchased seed may be offered as can seeds which perhaps were not to your requirements.

Should a number of people be interested in a particular variety for which seed is only available in 'uneconomic' or impractical quantities, we may consider compiling list(s) for purchase and sharing. Views on such an option are again welcomed from members.

Pictures from the Autumn Show





Development of Greenbelt Land – HAVE YOUR SAY

Due to changes in the Government planning system Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) are currently planning how our Borough should develop in the next 15 – 20 years.

The Council are advised that they have to meet the full requirement for market and affordable homes, and as such have estimated that in excess of 5000 new homes will need to be built in Gravesham, in this time scale.

The Council states that existing brownfield and regeneration sites cannot provide for all the homes needed. For this reason some Greenbelt land has been identified for possible development. Several of these Greenbelt sites are in the Meopham area. This is known as rolling back the greenbelt.

How do you feel about this? Would you welcome more development in our village to widen our community, or do you feel (as many others do) that the resources within our village are already stretched and could not accommodate an extra 900+ homes (the number of dwellings that has been identified for the Meopham area).

We are in the middle of a six week consultation period in which Gravesham Borough Council are asking members of the public to voice their opinions. They want as many people as possible to join the debate and will listen to everyone who contributes. The consultation period ends on 8th December 2011.

Full details of the important GBC documents describing in detail the areas affected are available on www.gravesham.com/ldf or from the Meopham Parish office.

GBC would prefer people to contact them via e-mail but conventional letters will also be included. Letters should be directed to Wendy Lane, Principal Planning Officer, Gravesham Borough Council, Civic Centre, Gravesend DA12 1AU.

HAVE YOUR SAY – If you have a view, MAKE IT KNOWN – don't leave it to others or think that your opinion won't count. Remember you only have until the 8th December 2011.

Climate Change (Global Warming)

Americans take for granted annual bounteous harvests of grain, meat, dairy, fruits, vegetables and other crops. The U.S. alone accounts for half of all world corn exports, 40% of soybean and 30% of wheat exports. But there is no long-term reserve. We have a global food supply of about 2 or 3 weeks and we've become insensitive to climate -- with air conditioning, irrigation and better practices.

Extreme events have brought the vulnerability of agriculture to climate to the forefront. The long-term climate trends are not as important as the variability. Farmers are already adapting, but variability is only going to increase and will require continual changes to their methods.

In Iowa, dew point temperatures have risen 3.5° Fahrenheit in the last 35-40 years. This means 13% more moisture in the air during the summertime leading to higher night-time summer temperatures in the Corn Belt and likely trimmed corn yields in recent years. (Corn likes hot days but cool nights.)

In Texas, huge reservoirs have just vanished and you can't simply adapt to such drastic changes.

DuPont's Landscaping Weed-killer Imprelis is Killing Trees

Published by Jim Hightower in 'OtherWords'

DuPont say they are investigating the reports of "unfavorable tree symptoms". Not just one tree, but hundreds of thousands all across the country are suffering the final "symptom". The culprit is Imprelis, a DuPont weed-killer widely applied to lawns, golf courses, and — ironically — cemeteries. Rather than just poisoning dandelions and other weeds, the herbicide also seems to be causing spruces, pines, willows, poplars, and other unintended victims to croak.

At first, DuPont tried to dodge responsibility, urging customers to be patient and leave the tree corpses on their lawns to see if they'd come back to life in a few years. However, faith-based landscaping was a hard sell and disgruntled homeowners began filing lawsuits. Then trees on the grounds of the DuPont Country Club also developed the "unfavorable symptoms" of Imprelis poisoning. So, with DuPont's cooperation, the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has finally banned sales of the tree-killing herbicide. But because of inadequate testing and a rush to profit, the poison will remain in the soil — and our water— for many moons. Trees will continue to die. Will we never learn?

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Resisting the Corporate Theft of Seeds

by Vandana Shiva

We are in a food emergency. Speculation and diversion of food to biofuel has contributed to an uncontrolled price rise, adding more to the billion already denied their right to food. Industrial agriculture is pushing species to extinction through the use of toxic chemicals that kill our bees and butterflies, our earthworms and soil organisms that create soil fertility. Plant and animal varieties are disappearing as monocultures displace biodiversity. Industrial, globalized agriculture is responsible for 40% of greenhouse gases, which then destabilize agriculture by causing climate chaos, creating new threats to food security.

Community seed banks help preserve local biodiversity but the biggest threat we face is the control of seed and food moving out of the hands of farmers and communities and into a few corporate hands. Monopoly control of cottonseed and the introduction of genetically engineered Bt cotton has already given rise to an epidemic of farmers' suicides in India. A quarter-million farmers have taken their lives because of debt induced by the high costs of nonrenewable seed, which spins billions of dollars of royalty for firms like Monsanto.

I started Navdanya in 1987 to address the challenge of GM seeds, seed patents and seed monopolies.

We have been successful in reclaiming seed sovereignty and creating sixty community seed banks to reclaim seed as a commons. We have proven that biodiverse ecological agriculture produces more food and nutrition per acre than monocultures, while reducing costs to the planet and to farmers.

But our efforts are like a little lamp in a very dark room. We keep the lamp of possibilities and alternatives burning. The food emergency, however, calls for a much wider response.

The food movement must become more integrated, from seed to table, from village to city, from South to North. We need to be stronger in challenging the corporate control of our food system and the role of governments in increasing, rather than stopping, the corporate abuse of our seeds and soils, our bodies and our health. Michelle Obama has an organic garden at the White House, but the Obama administration is embracing GMOs in the United States and around the world. The US-India agriculture agreement—signed by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh in 2005, at the same time as the signing of the US-India nuclear deal—has on its board representatives from Monsanto, ADM and Walmart. The hijacking of our food systems is the hijacking of our democracy.

That is why we have to make food democracy the core of the defense of our freedom and survival. We will either have food dictatorship for a while and then a collapse of our food systems and our societies, or we will succeed in building robust food democracies, resting on resilient ecosystems and resilient communities. There is still a chance for the second alternative.

Navdanya International was founded in India by Dr. Vandana Shiva. Navdanya's aim is to defend and protect nature and the rights of people to access to food and water, to dignified jobs and livelihoods. Promoting local and ecological food models is critical to alleviating poverty, hunger, and safeguarding natural resources, including water, especially in this time of climate change chaos. Navdanya believes that cultural and biological diversity is essential for ensuring creative, peaceful societies throughout the planet.

Farming Without Sunlight

A Dutch group, called PlantLab, is experimenting with specially selected colours of artificial light to grow plants in an underground hanger with no sunlight. New light sources cost little to run and can deliver the exact colour that PlantLab requires. The plants look black, not because they're rotten or genetically engineered, but because they are bathed solely in blue and red light – there is no green for the plants to reflect.

In sunlight plants have to deal with light they do not use for photosynthesis. They heat up and waste energy cooling themselves, thus reducing yields. Cooler plants in the hanger need less water.

The system is taking two steps at once - growing plants in totally controlled conditions and just around the corner from the consumer. Moreover, PlantLab claims that the only water that leaves their premises is in the form of edible plant material.

(By Hal Hodson. From a Green Mail Press Release)

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