



Taken at Hole Park 21 June

Photo: Jo Latimer

Summer 2012

Autumn Show 8th September 2012

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 2012 schedule. Entry details should be phoned through to our Show Secretary Sharon Sperling between 6 and 9pm on the Thursday prior to the show. She will also be accepting e-mail entries to shows@meophamgardeners.co.uk. The entry form is available from the Shows part of the website. Please make sure they are received before 6pm on the Thursday. The fee is 10p for each entry.

Exhibits may be staged on the Friday evening between 8.30 and 9pm 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 about 4:15pm.

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL 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

August 13th Summer Social

Our summer social will consist of a small show with the winners voted for by those present. There will be a quiz and a raffle and refreshments will be provided. There is no charge to members but for £2 non-members will also be welcome to come along and take part. There is no need to pre-book your entries, just bring them along on the evening and exhibit. The classes are as follows:

1. A rose selected for fragrance
2. A flowering pot plant (pot no larger than 20cm (8"))
3. A vase of garden flowers (Association vases will be provided)

September 8th Autumn Show

September 10th Growing & Showing Daffodils Mrs Doulton

October 8th What We Are Doing at Rifleman Cottage– a Permaculture Talk
John Rudgard

Late October Coach Trip to Sheffield Park - details to follow

November 12th Plant Heritage Jude Lawton

Recent Events

May 14th Gardening for Wildlife and the Kent Wildlife Gardening Award Scheme
Maureen Rainey

The Wildlife Gardening Awards Scheme run by the Kent Wildlife Trust is to encourage wildlife 'corridors' through urban environments between the main wildlife breeding grounds across the county. Any garden can enter whether it is a large country house or a small balcony. As well as awards, the Kent Wildlife Trust also offer advice. Let's hope they get many more entries from Meopham in future.

June 11th Garden Outing to Haydown, Great Buckland

With a Met Office amber warning in force, we visited the garden of Dr and Mrs Edelanu. In spite of the poor weather, we were shown around the garden and the wildflower meadow in particular. They have 7 varieties of wild orchids which may be the most in the county and even with the gloom descending we were able to see 4 or 5 of them.

Afterwards we took refuge indoors to enjoy a glass of their wine. As ever we were made to feel most welcome and on a more pleasant summer evening, we would have undoubtedly seen more of the garden.

June 21st Coach Trip to Hole Park

After a short stop at Dobbies Garden Centre in Ashford, we went onto Hole Park. The formal garden is set out in compartments with various features and there is a less formal meadow and wooded area as well. Although a cloudy day it remained mostly dry until we were safely undercover enjoying our cream tea when the heavens opened. We have to thank Jewels Tours for taking only 24 of us.

July 9th Plant Hunting Trips and the World Garden Through the Seasons
Tom Hart Dyke

The village hall was packed for the long awaited visit by our local 'celebrity' plant hunter and we were treated to a most entertaining evening. Tom spoke about his recent plant hunting trips, trials with the weather and the World Garden of Plants which has been created since his release from captivity in Columbia in 2000. The garden has been open for 7 years now and has seen many developments. The latest to be opened is the Moroccan room which looked stunning with the mixture of bright blue and terracotta colours.

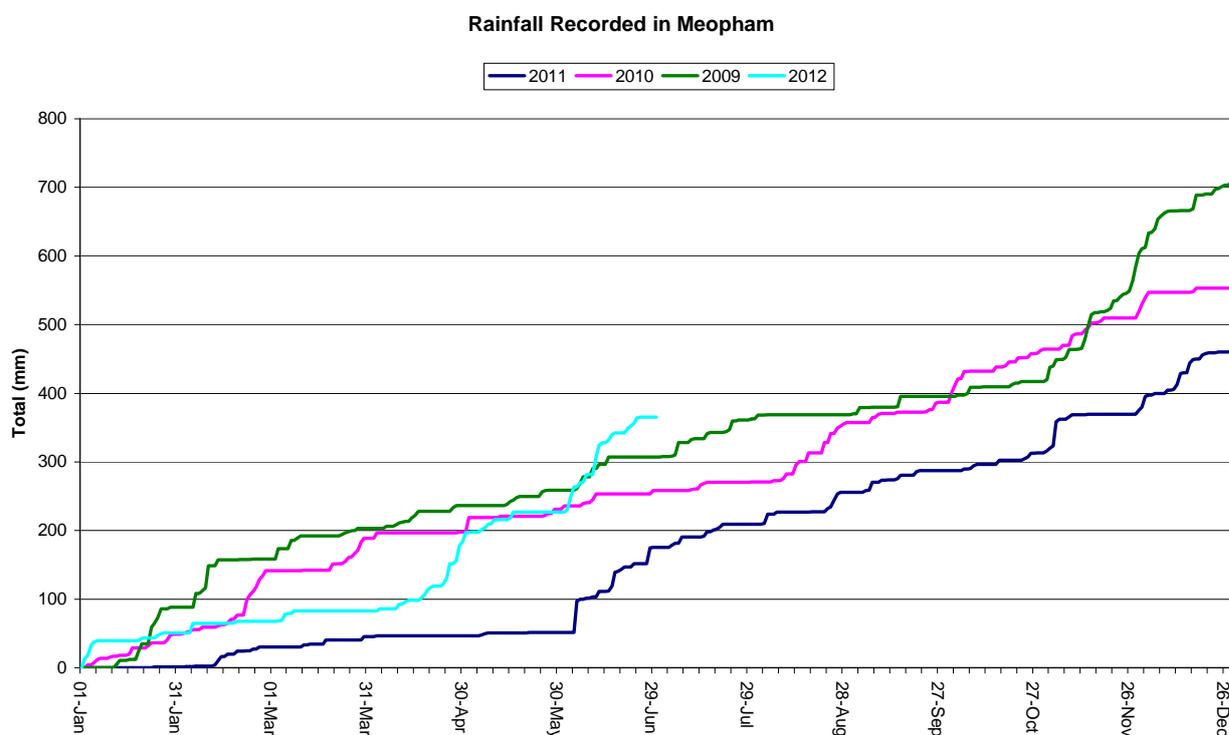
The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Human Sundial



The Human Sundial was installed at Culverstone Recreation Ground on July 11th and by that weekend it was submerged as the rain continued to fall. Fortunately the ground dried up sufficiently for the wellies to be left at home for grand opening on the 19th July. In fact the sun shone as the Mayor of Gravesham, Lyn Milner officially opened the sundial. She presented Jubilee medals to the Year 6 pupils of Culverstone School, seen kneeling at the front of the above picture, in recognition of the marvelous work they did on the hour markers. Please visit it on a sunny day if you get a chance. The following pictures show the date scale and hour markers before installation:



Rainfall



This graph shows the cumulative rainfall from January 1st to June 30th 2012 along with the annual rainfall for the 3 previous years. After a very dry start to the year the heavens opened once the water company had imposed restrictions on the use of hosepipes in the garden at the beginning of April. The total rainfall until the end of June was 365mm or 14.4" which is more than double that of the same period last year.

The year began stormy but mild with a more settled cold spell mid-January before the unsettled conditions returned. Temperatures were generally 1.5°C above average and our rainfall was about 75% of normal. It was provisionally the 4th sunniest January since 1929. A high pressure system over Europe gave us a cold start to February with the only lying snow of the winter arriving on the 5th. A minimum temperature of -15.6° C recorded at Holbeach (Lincolnshire) on the 11th was the lowest of the winter. By the middle of February, milder conditions had returned and it was very mild by the end of the month. It was also drier and sunnier than average. A maximum temperature of 18.7°C was recorded at Coleshill (Warwickshire) on the 23rd. March too was generally dry and sunny and provisionally the sunniest in England since 1929. Gravesend recorded 19°C on the 15th and maximum temperatures exceeded 20°C towards the end of the month with many weather stations recording record high temperatures. April was provisionally the wettest on record with some places recording 3 times the normal rainfall. Heavy rain and strong winds across southern Britain on 25th brought localised flooding and uprooted trees. Sunshine amounts were about normal. April was also colder than March with the maximum temperature of 19.7°C recorded at Kew Gardens on the 30th. The first 3 weeks of May were also cool and unsettled but temperatures were above 27°C somewhere in the UK each day from the 23rd to the 28th. It was particularly warm across Highland Scotland, and a new May temperature record for Scotland of 29.3°C was set at Achnagart on 25th. Rainfall was about normal. The beginning of June and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee weekend saw a return to the cool, wet conditions and these persisted for much of the month. It was the wettest June in England and Wales since 1910 and equal to that of June 1860. It was also the coolest June since 1991. Gravesend recorded the maximum temperature of 28.6° C on the 28th. The hosepipe ban was subsequently lifted at the beginning of July but the rain continued to fall.

The averaging period used was 1971–2000.

For information relating to the Meopham Garden Association go to our website at

www.meophamgardeners.co.uk



In The News

There is currently a new effort to try to convince the public that GM crops are not so bad after all, despite the serious ecological and health issues associated with their production and their consumption. However, no material benefit has been demonstrated as a result of their use. If you have 25 minutes to spare, then watch the YouTube video by farmer Mike Hart from Cornwall about their production in the USA to learn about some of the problems they are causing.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEX654gN3c4>

European Union officials are paving the way to bring genetically modified (GM) animals to the European market. The new guidelines mean that biotech companies now have the possibility to ask for permission to develop GM animals in Europe. Pressure to drop the zero tolerance policy comes from the US government, the WTO and the biotech industry. If you value your freedom of choice and do not wish to take part in experimentation with your wellbeing, your MP and DEFRA (Caroline Spellman and Lord Taylor of Holbeach) ought to be hearing from you.

Morrisons offer GM-fed eggs for Easter

At Easter, GM Freeze warned shoppers that Morrisons have abandoned their requirement for poultry farmers to use only non-GM feed and this also applies to egg producers. It is not clear whether any supermarket carries eggs from chickens fed on GM-free grains.

One of the reasons for this situation is that even though attempts are made to keep GM soya and non-GM soya separate, GM soya is neither marked nor separated from non-modified soya on the large scale during transport, storage and processing. There are two reasons for this situation:

- 1) No obligation exists from a legal point of view. The authorities agree on the point that with regard to product quality, human and ecological safety GM soybeans are not distinguishable from natural soybeans. (This position can hardly be sustained in the light of recent research.)
- 2) With the several million tons of soybeans shipped, stored and processed every year, a reliable and controllable separation is not feasible. (This is a cop-out.)

Neither of these reasons should be allowed to stand.

<http://www.phoschol.com/faqs/NutrasalGMO.pdf>

Only the Co-op carries processed foods (chicken) from non-GM fed animals.

<http://www.gmfreeze.org/why-freeze/unwanted/what-supermarkets-say-about-gm-feed/>

The use of GM in poultry feed remains highly controversial. Certified non-GM soya can be readily obtained. Soya meal produced in South America is the main source of protein in poultry feed. Argentina supplies the bulk of soya meal in the EU and UK, where nearly all production of Monsanto's Roundup Ready GM soya is routinely sprayed with the weedkiller glyphosate. Well documented independent research shows strong links between glyphosate use and health problems in rural areas, including birth defects. Impacts on wildlife, especially frogs and soil microorganisms, are also being observed. Glyphosate residues in crops, rivers and groundwater are frequently detected in areas where glyphosate is used. Moreover, when glyphosate breaks down in the soil it is converted to other toxic substances.

GM Wheat Trials discussed in BBC programme Life Scientific

Professor John Pickett's experimental work has engineered insect alarm systems into wheat to repel aphids. Previously he developed a technique to help farmers in Africa to improve their yields simply by planting what are known as companion crops that repel pests and trap crops which entice the insects. So if this approach is so successful is there really a need for GM versions?

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01jqjkz>



GM Bt Maize Genes Present in the Blood of Animals

Studies by the international GMSA Food project found genes from GM Bt maize present in the blood of animals fed on the crop, and also in the flesh of salmon fed on GM feed. They also found GM proteins and, critically, antibodies to those proteins, in the blood of rats fed Bt maize, indicating an immune response to the GM proteins. This means current safety assessments of foods from animals fed a GM diet are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure safety – **long-term feeding studies are not required for meat, milk or eggs from GM-fed animals.**

Patents Ban on Plants and Animals Welcomed

Commenting on the recent European Parliament vote calling on the European Patents Office to stop granting patents on conventionally bred plants and animals, GM Freeze Campaign Director Pete Riley said:

“GM Freeze is delighted that MEPs have so conclusively voted to end the practice of granting patents for conventionally bred animals and plants.”

GM Wheat Outcrosses Six Times More Than Non-GM

Recent research has found that varieties of GM wheat are outcrossing to other plants at a rate six times higher than conventional varieties.

These findings, along with other data showing wheat can outcross from commercial fields to crops over 2.75 kilometres away, are reviewed in a briefing published by GM Freeze.

<http://www.gmfreeze.org/publications/thin-ice-newsletter/130/>

<http://www.gmfreeze.org/why-freeze/videos-and-clips/>

Biofuels

The government announced a £100 million fund for green investment and is working to increase the generation of electricity from biomass. Unfortunately, the UK is too small to meet the demand envisaged and will have to import much of what is required. The basic problem is that photosynthesis sequesters only a fraction of 1% of the sun's energy and so large areas of land are needed, leading us to shelve projects to produce wood pellets in the UK because of lack of raw material. In fact, it is not possible for industrial biofuels to be of major benefit in the race to reduce our need for fossil fuels without major damage to food supplies and serious implications for sustainability.

<http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/news/energybizsumm/energybizsumm.aspx>

http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b01d15s/Farming_Today_Farming_Today_This_Week/

Feedstock like switch grass, sweet corn and sugar cane can be converted to liquid biofuels, but, of course, this conversion takes energy and you end up with less of it than what you started with. Some plants produce liquid biomass directly. It is madness that vast areas of forest in places like the Amazon basin and Indonesia are being cleared to make way for plantations to make palm oil and we should make sure that our taxes are not used to subsidise companies that are involved with these ventures. The loss of biodiversity is beyond belief.

<http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/>

Biofuel production is already putting upward pressures on food prices.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-18858444>